INDIA DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

A Study of the Work of the Birla Education Trust

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BY

JOSSLEYN HENNESSY

With a foreword by S. Radhakrishnan
Vice-President of the Indian Union

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FOREWORD

THE new India is born of a revolution, essentially peaceful and non-violent and is pledged to democracy. Intellectual, political, economic and industrial movements which in Europe made their way in successive periods are in India in simultaneous ferment. The future progress of the country depends on accomplishing in a few decades the work of centuries. The essential means of bringing about a new society is education. Apart from the attempts of the Government to reorient education to new ideals, private agencies also are attempting to reconstruct education in a generous, humane and liberal spirit. One such private enterprise is the Birla Education Trust. The Chairman of the Trust is Shri G. D. Birla, well known as an enlightened businessman. Naturally he is interested in the development of Technical education. The details of the different institutions maintained by the Trust are described in this book written by Mr. Jossleyn Hennessy with the assistance of his wife.

About 6200 boys and girls are being educated in schools and colleges maintained by the Trust and the education that is imparted to them aims at making them useful citizens of our new democracy. In a welfare state, our aim should be not only to provide the elementary necessities of food, clothing and shelter to all our citizens but to make them live as brothers even though they may belong to different races, creeds and provinces. Education for democracy, for creation of a unitary state to which local particularisms and centrifugal ambitions are subordinated, has been the aim of the different institutions.

The cause of democracy is the cause of the human individual, of the free spirit of man with its spontaneous inspiration and endeavour. Every man whose thoughts and feelings are not silted up has his own inner possession, which belongs to him alone, his holy shrine, which he has won for himself. When an individual is trained to appreciate his own holy being, he will develop a chastity of mind and spirit and approach with inner trembling another's sanctuary.

Intolerance is basically unchastity. If we do not give this spiritual direction to our education, it fails of its purpose.

sākṣaro viparītatve rākṣaso bhavati dhruvam.

Those who are learned but do not possess love, they really become demoniac. They will be characterised by intellectual arrogance, spiritual crassness and coldness of heart. It is a great satisfaction to know that the educational institutions of the Birla Education Trust under the effective leadership of Shri G. D. Birla are working for the saving of the soul, the relief of man's state and for the glory of God.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

New Delhi,
3rd March, 1954.

NOTE

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Jossleyn Hennessy

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I have been unable to identify the author or publishers of the verses quoted in chapter IV and hope that their copyright owner will forgive their use without permission.

J. H.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

PLATES

PLATES

HIGH SCHOOL (30-39) AND GAMES, SPORTS, ATHLETICS

Between pages 108—9

RURAL EDUCATION

Between pages 140—41

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS

Between pages 184—85

PLATES

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS

Between pages 184—85

VALIKA VIDYAPEETH

Between pages 208—9

ENGINEERING COLLEGE (91-100) AND VIDYAMANDIR

Between pages 248—49

PLATES

VIDYAMANDIR

Between pages 248—49

TEXTILE INSTITUTE

Between pages 308—9

CHAPTER I

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

OF WHAT INTEREST is the work of the Birla Education Trust to the non-specialist in education, such as myself?

Since 1937, my life and work has been connected with India. To have watched the struggle for independence, to have taken part in the scenes, both grim and joyous, of its achievement, to have travelled thousands of miles in innumerable journeys from the Khyber Pass to Pondicherry, from Bengal to Baluchistan, from Simla to Junagadh, to have spent so many leisure hours reading the history of India's past, so many working hours observing and recording India's contemporary history in the making, to have linked one's own fortunes to India's prosperity or adversity, to have been as happy as I with so many good Indian friends—it is impossible to have lived through these experiences without identifying oneself more and more with the country, as the spirit of its history and philosophy, and the interests of its people, become part of one's own life. Successively, as a government official, as a foreign correspondent, as a partner in a Calcutta business house, as an economic and political commentator for an Indian newspaper, I have had to study many aspects of Indian life and been compelled to speculate about India's future.

The future? The leaders who secured India's independence —Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari, Pant, Rajendra Prasad, B. C. Roy, and so many others—proved themselves to be a race of giants. And the civil servants—Girja Shankar Bajpai, K. P. S. Menon, Sirdar Panikkar, Chintaman Deshmukh, and yet more—who manned the steel frame that held India together throughout the tumultuous years from 1946 to the relative calm of 1950; and those who produced the wealth without which statesmen order and civil servants administer in vain, without which independence itself is an illusion, the business and industrial leaders: G. D. Birla, J. R. D. Tata, John Matthai, Ramaswami Mudaliar, Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Cowasji Jehangir, Homi Modi and the rest; all these—statesmen, civil servants, industrialists— proved themselves equal to their occasions. They kindled the flames of freedom into a blaze. They struggled manfully and successfully with the problems, the difficulties, the crises

that followed independence. But they grow no younger, and all are mortal. Will their successors in the generations immediately to come prove themselves as great, as capable, as competent, as resourceful?

To ask this question is to pose at once the problem of education in India. For, while every now and then some exceptional genius may manifest himself who, like Alfred the Great, Charlemagne, or Akbar—apparently untrained and uneducated—performs natural prodigies, the ordinary genius—Winston Churchill, Jawaharlal Nehru, Franklin Roosevelt—would be the first to admit the essential part that education played in preparing him for the challenging tasks that he undertook. It is arguable that the spiritual, political, and economic life of a nation is as rich, flourishing, and varied, as its leaders in these spheres are capable of making it, and conversely, that there is a direct relation between the quality of the contribution that its leaders make and the quality of the education that they have received. It is not impossible to be a philosopher without reading Plato and Buddha, or to build a bridge without studying engineering, or to become Finance Minister without an acquaintance with economics, but in each case it is surely easier if the way has been prepared. Still more important than book learning is that the character of the philosopher, the engineer, and the finance minister, should have been well and truly laid. Personal integrity, leadership, and the consciousness of obligations towards one's fellow citizens and the state, are qualities and habits that can either be fostered in well-run schools and colleges, or frustrated, distorted, destroyed in badly conducted ones. All who love India, and desire a great and prosperous future for her as an independent nation, are dismayed when they discover what passes for education and character building in too many of India's schools and universities—the nurseries of the future.

But, it may be asked, if the founding fathers of India's independence have shown themselves so capable, why is there reason to fear that their successors will be lesser men? The answer is that while there are as great exceptions in India as in any other country in the world, the numbers of adequately educated people are small in relation to the need for leaders in politics, industry, science, and in all the many branches of action and knowledge. The burden which the scarcity of trained personnel places on men like Nehru in politics, Bajpai in the civil services, or Birla in industry, is far greater than

in Britain, France, or America; in comparison with the deputies, aides, and advisers, on whom a Winston Churchill, an Alexander Cadogan, or a Henry Ford, can rely, the Indian leaders have to shoulder a disproportionate amount of the work themselves, and their output is therefore handicapped in quality, amount, and speed.

The problems of Indian education have been the subject of innumerable books and investigations, and successive reports have insisted again and again on certain continuing weaknesses (See chapter III). When, therefore, I read the prospectus on the schools and colleges of the Birla Education Trust, I was at once struck by the emphasis placed on certain aspects of their work, and I felt that if the claims made were justified, here was a great educational experiment about which only a few specialists had heard, and of which the average man in India and abroad knew nothing.

To all who believe in democracy and who reject Communism, the future of India is important. Were India to go the way of China and become a Communist state, freedom throughout the world would receive a grievous blow. Four hundred millions would lose the rights guaranteed to them by the Indian constitution, and would be subjected to the tyrannies and miseries of a police state, while the power of survival—spiritual and material—of the other democracies would be undermined.

The history of the South American republics, and of others where democracy was not an indigenous growth, suggests that decades must pass before it would be safe to claim that democracy had established itself firmly in India. It is probably true that out of India's total population, only a tiny minority of the 65,000,000 literates could reasonably be described as fervent democrats; to the average educated Indian, democracy is a matter of acquiescence rather than fervour, while to the illiterate millions, it cannot yet mean much.* All the more important, then, to the small and devoted band of genuine Indian democrats, as to the watching democratic world without, that India's youth should be educated in the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. One of the objects of this book is to help the reader to formulate for himself the answer to the questions: What teaching and training of this kind is being given (a) in India's schools and universities as a whole, and (b) in the Birla Education Trust's institutions?

* These ideas are elaborated in chapter III. See page 29.

The headquarters of the Birla Education Trust are at Pilani, the home village of the Birla family, in the Shekhawati district of Jaipur State, now merged into the union of Rajasthan states. I confess that among the attractions of a book about the work of the Trust was the chance that it presented of seeing a corner of India, right off the beaten track, rarely visited by Europeans. Recruitment to the Indian Educational Service was discontinued in 1924, so that there are today scarcely any Europeans who know something of up-country schools and colleges in out of the way places. Here was an opportunity of opening up a new vista on independent India, of enjoying at first hand aspects of Indian life which the average foreigner never experiences.

And, again, if these aspects were unfamiliar, new and interesting to a European, there was the possibility that his report on them might give Indians a new angle of vision on ideas and problems with which they were familiar only in a general way. Moreover, of the particular solution found for these problems and of the new ideas developed at Pilani, few Indians know anything at all, for the Trust has no public relations department and carries on its work without publicity.

In brief, my hopes are:

(1) to provide Indian parents and teachers with the view that a sympathetic foreigner has formed of their problems;

(2) to provide foreign parents and teachers with some points for a comparative study of conditions, methods, and aims, in their own countries;

(3) to stir democrats in India to ask what contribution each can make as a citizen of the Indian republic towards solving the problems described;

(4) to help the friendly foreign observer to a better understanding of some important aspects of Indian life which must profoundly affect India's relations with other countries but which are rarely brought to the non-specialist's notice.

CHAPTER II

HOW THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN

I OUTLINED to G.D.Birla the ideas discussed in the previous chapter. I told him that my business in Calcutta would prevent me from paying more than short visits to Pilani, but that my wife, Lora, could spend three or four months there. She is, moreover, qualified to investigate educational work: she obtained her teacher's certificate at Froebel College with first class honours; she had a wide experience of teaching before our marriage; and after our return to India from leave with our three children in 1950, she had been teaching them herself, to such effect that the eldest boy secured a bursary to the public school which he entered in the U.K. fifteen months later.

G.D.Birla told me to go ahead.

So it was that on October 1, 1951, Lora, our second son Armyn, then aged 12, our daughter Aminta, aged 10, and I, travelled from Calcutta to Delhi, where we changed on to the metre gauge line for Loharu, the station for Pilani, which is about 100 miles due west of Delhi, on the edge of the Thar, or Great Indian Desert. I returned to Calcutta a week later, and was able to spend a second week in Pilani over Christmas. Lora remained there for four and a half months until February 15, 1952. In October, 1952, she paid a second visit to fill up various gaps in our knowledge revealed in the course of writing the book. And on this trip she also visited the Trust's Naini Tal Centre.

Lora and the children enjoyed themselves. They made friends not only among the heads of colleges and the teachers, but also among the boys and girls, and whereas much can be concealed from a school inspector during a brief visit, it becomes difficult to conceal anything from someone who stays on as a member of the family, especially when accompanied by two uninhibited children whose favourite word is "why?" and who refuse to be left out of anything that is going on. To the principals, professors, teachers, and students, Lora was not only a professional educationist, but a sympathetic listener in whom many were anxious to confide for the sake of disinterested comment from one not entangled in local problems. At Pilani, as elsewhere, the onlooker sees most of the game, and at the end of her time there, I think

it possible that Lora knew more of the place as a whole than any one of its permanent inhabitants, thoroughly as each doubtless knew their own particular bailiwick.

Every day Lora and the children found means to take part in the life of Pilani. They visited schools and colleges; they attended lectures and theatricals. Armyn went to Mr. Bhoor Singh's drawing classes at the High School; Aminta attended needlework classes and took part in the Vidyapeeth's Independence day exercises; they joined in picnics and outings; they watched the games and the athletics. The children made friends and played; Lora made friends and talked. Teachers and students dropped in at the Canal Kothi guest-house, where we were staying, at all hours, and they talked about education, about their problems, their work, their misgivings, and their ambitions. And when the last visitor had gone and the children had been put to bed, Lora sat down to type me her notes of what she had seen, heard, and thought.

Every day in Calcutta, I studied Lora's latest notes, and wrote back directing her further attention to this point or that; and, in the light of the books that I was reading on educational problems in India, Britain, France, and America, I suggested new angles of enquiry to Lora, and drafted questionnaires for her to circulate in Pilani.

Lora's voluminous notes provided a quarry of observed facts which form the solid core of chapters IV to XII. When I came to use this material, I found that it made for a less clumsy text to write these chapters in the first person than to describe what Lora saw and did in the third person and to mingle this confusingly (a) with first person references to what I saw and did, and (b) with the conclusions that I reached on the joint basis of Lora's reports and of my own observations.

A word about the way in which I have presented this investigation:

First, except for (a) the conclusion of chapter II in which I offer some comments on India's basic educational problems, and (b) the final chapter in which I attempt an assessment of the Trust's work, I have endeavoured to marshal the facts so that they speak for themselves. Complete objectivity is not humanly possible, but at least I have reduced comment to the minimum.

Secondly, these pages will, I hope, show that I am not afraid of abstract thought; yet I distrust it unless it is subject

to constant correction by reference to concrete examples and to living people. A school is the expression of the personalities of its governing body, its headmaster, his assistants, and his pupils. When the abstract is closely linked to the concrete and to the living, I feel that its chances of making a contribution to understanding are greater. Consequently, I have set out the policies of the Trust's institutions largely in terms of the people that I met in them. Without these people, there would have been no institutions and no policies —just empty halls.

I feel that the effort made to visualise how Commander S.D.Pande behaved when he found the three hundred and fifty teachers and boys, for whose welfare he was responsible, without water at 10 p.m. one hot-weather night when he was still new to Pilani and some of the "old gang" were out to trip him up if they could, or how he defied the might of Jaipur State in defence of three of his staff, throw simultaneous light on the man and his work, and therefore on those abstractions—the Trust and its policies. Likewise, the pictures that I have tried to give of Mrs. Upadhyaya strolling among her girls, guarded at night by the Vidyapeeth *chowkidar* crouching over the fire with his blind camel beside him, seem to me to give in a few paragraphs more insight into what she thinks a girls' school should be than would pages of third-person discussion of the Vidyapeeth's methods. To report Mr. Raman's delighted whispers into my ear when his boys were "taking him off" in one of their plays explains much in the "atmosphere" (whatever that abstraction may be) of the Montessori School. And I'd rather catch Mr. Joshi in his battered old hat coaching his boys at the High School cricket nets, or Dr. Wolf laughing his head off as speaker of the Vidyamandir parliament, than listen to lengthy disquisitions on the disciplinary relationship between masters and boys. A paragraph of personality observed at work is worth a chapter of pedagogic theory.

I do not attempt an exhaustive study of the work of each of the Trust's schools and colleges. Those who want prospectuses listing the fees, the subjects taught, the names of the professors, recent examination results, detailed arrangements for games, extra-curricular activities, and so on, can obtain them by writing to the Principal of the college that interests them. Such information is important in its proper place, but it has little value for my purpose, which is broadly that of the historian as defined by Professor L.B.Namier

when, in his *Avenues of History*, he says: "To distinguish a tree you look at its shape, its bark and leaf; counting and measuring its branches would get you nowhere. Similarly, what matters in history is the great outline and the significant detail; what must be avoided is the deadly morass of irrelevant narrative." What I attempt is to give facts enough for a foundation, and thereafter to endeavour to seize the spirit of the institutions described, to enable the reader to assess for himself the strengths and weaknesses of the Trust's work as a whole.

CHAPTER III

INDIA'S EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

IN THIS CHAPTER, I outline the basic problems of Indian education in order that the work of the Trust's institutions may be judged not in isolation but against the background of the contemporary scene.

As a preliminary, let us consider for a moment the functions of an ideal school and university. Both are engaged in fitting boys and girls to take their places as adult members of their community. Boys and girls lack experience, so the school's object is to widen their experience, intellectual and social, in ways progressively adapted to their ages.

"This is the sort of place the world is," schoolmaster and university professor say in effect. "These are the ways in which you will be expected to behave when you become full citizens. Unless you so behave, civilisation cannot be maintained, still less advance. Here are some of the problems that we have solved, and here are more with which we are still struggling. If you take advantage of the facilities that we offer you here, it may be your privilege to join in helping to solve some of these problems."

Professor A. N. Whitehead says in his *Aims of Education*: "Now, the natural mode by which living organisms are excited towards suitable self-development is enjoyment. The infant is lured to adapt itself to its environment by its love of its mother and its nurse; we eat because we like a good dinner; we subdue the forces of nature because we have been lured to discovery by an insatiable curiosity: we enjoy exercise; and we enjoy the unchristian passion of hating our dangerous enemies. Undoubtedly pain is one subordinate means of arousing an organism to action. But it only supervenes on the failure of pleasure. Joy is the normal healthy spur for the *élan vital*...we should seek to arrange the development of character along a path of natural activity, in itself pleasurable..." At a university such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, or Yale, there is virtually no curiosity and no experience—ranging from recognised subjects like philosophy, history, or science, to extra-curricular activities like debating, stamp collecting, glee singing, instrumental music, the drama, photography, or dancing—that cannot be satisfied with joy. An Oxford undergraduate who finds a subject or

a hobby that interests him for which no provision exists in the university starts a club for it himself.*

Oxford is a replica in complex miniature of the complex world—a microcosm that opens the door to every experience which can attract a young man or woman. He (or she) tastes this, that, or the other subject, hobby, or activity of body or mind, and discovers whether it is, or is not, for him; whether, for example, he wishes to make music, politics, the church, painting, business, acting, or journalism, his career or his recreation in life. In his college, in his social clubs and hobby societies, he learns that some people are difficult, and have to be jollied along or won over by tact. He begins to discover that life is not wholly painted in the gay hues in which his romantic youth delights. He encounters disappointments. He may have set his heart on being elected president of some club, or on winning some other undergraduate distinction; he fails. But his difficulties and disappointments are in scale with the miniature cosmos in which he lives. Failure to become president of an undergraduate society is not a blight on the rest of a man's (or woman's) life, any more than are the difficulties created by some obstreperous fellow committee-member. The average man leaves the university equipped not only with an adequately trained mind from his academic studies, but with a variety of lessons in co-operation with (a) those in authority over him, (b) his contemporary fellow men, and, not least, (c) his fellow women; he has absorbed ideas of responsible citizenship without probably ever having read a book on "civics". He looks forward to the contribution that he hopes to make to his country's material and spiritual welfare in the career that he has chosen for himself, although, if he is British or American he is not likely consciously to have thought out his approach to life in those terms, which would strike him as priggish. Nothing, I hasten to add is further from my thought than to imply that British or American graduates belong to a race of supermen, above all human follies and vices. They are products of imperfect systems which educationists struggle continuously to improve. But imperfect though the British and American systems are, their aim is to launch their young men and women joyously into the stream of life, in constructive cheerful, forward-

* In my time, a group of undergraduates formed a club for road building, and went out and built a road where none had existed before. I did not belong to it.

looking mood.* Their problem is to perfect systems of which it can at least be said that, with all their admitted weaknesses, they are not functioning badly.

When, however, one turns to India, one finds agreement among all Indian authorities that the Indian educational system is not functioning well. In substantiation of this view, I submit the evidence of three main witnesses whose impartiality should be above suspicion; reports on conditions in schools and universities published by (1) the Press Trust of India, (2) the *Statesman*, and (3) the University Education Commission of 1948/49. The P.T.I., a news agency owned by leading Indian newspapers, has no interest in publishing unfavourable reports about Indian students. Apart from its tradition of objective news presentation, ordinary prudence would make the *Statesman*, a foreign-owned newspaper, reluctant to publish unfavourable reports that could not stand up to investigation about Indian institutions. As for the University Education Commission, appointed by the independent Government of India, the eminence in the academic world of the Commission's seven Indian, one British, and two American members, raises their report above controversy. They had no axe to grind save India's welfare.

What strikes the enquirer at the outset more forcibly than any other fact is the indiscipline prevalent throughout India's schools and colleges. The word "prevalent" is not mine but is taken from the questionnaire addressed to educational authorities by the University Education Commission. Question XIV, headed "Students and Discipline," asks under 2(b); "How do you account for the prevalent indiscipline among students...?"

The use of the word "indiscipline" to describe what goes on in the average college is a discreet understatement. Between January, 1950, and October, 1952, that is during thirty-three months, the index of the Calcutta edition of the *Statesman* shows that the paper published as many as 157 separate items of news concerning the activities of students. Of those I managed to obtain cuttings of 105 items, totalling 506½ column inches, that is 27 columns. Each item averaged 4.82 inches, so that the 157 indexed can be estimated to total 727.82 column inches, and to fill no fewer than 36 1/5 columns of the *Statesman*'s 19½ inch columns.

* "I am sending my daughter to your school," a parent said to Mrs Clark, headmistress of the Modern High School for Girls in Calcutta, "in order that you may push her through the matric as quickly as possible" "On the contrary, you are sending her to me to enjoy herself as much as possible," was Mrs Clark's reply.

I should explain that during the same period I doubt that a representative British or American daily (other than a local paper) would, outside its sports columns, have published a single item on students' activities, except possibly a few lines on some social occasion, like the Fourth of June at Eton, or once in a twelvemonth a paragraph about a student's "rag" in aid of charity. Not one of the *Statesman*'s 157 items, however, is concerned with sport or social occasions: they report students in the news for murder, beating up, violence, strikes, hunger strikes, processions and demonstrations, leading only too frequently to police *lathi* charges, tear-gas firing, and hospitalised casualties.

In presenting the picture that follows, I want it understood from the outset that this is *not* an attack on Indian students. The evidence shows that they are the victims of circumstances. If these circumstances can be modified, the behaviour of Indian students would be as normal as any in the world.

In 1951, nine students of Aligarh University were charged with conspiring together to assault Dr. K. L. Garg, principal of Baraseni College, resulting in his death. The motive alleged by the prosecution was the expulsion by Dr. Garg of certain students for cheating at an examination which he was supervising.

In the first week of January, 1952, the principal of Dhanamanjuri College at Imphal expelled six students.* Principals in all countries are called upon to take such painful decisions on occasion, but it requires courage to act thus in India. For the next three months, not merely the College but the whole town of Imphal was in an uproar. The situation went from bad to worse until the P.T.I. correspondent reported:

62 INJURED IN IMPHAL INCIDENTS

Imphal, February 13—About 62 persons, including 50 boys and five women, were injured when police and troops broke up two demonstrations here today with *lathis* and butt-ends of rifles. The injured women, and seven others, were admitted to hospital.

The demonstrations were against the expulsion of about half a dozen students of Dhanamanjuri College here two months ago. The students have been on strike, demanding the removal of the principal.

Troops have been called out to maintain order.

Over 450 college students and schoolboys have been rounded up during the past three days for unlawful demonstrations. They were taken in truckloads to an unknown destination under police escort

The 50 boys were injured this morning as police used *lathis* in

* Some reports say only three.

trying to disperse 3,000 secondary school students who had collected near Government House to demonstrate their sympathy with the strike. Fifty were arrested.

In the evening about 10,000 people, led by schoolboys and their mothers, marched towards Government House. Police and troops dispersed the crowd. Five women and seven others were injured

Several political parties, including the State Congress, at a public meeting here yesterday backed up the students' demand for the removal of the principal. All shops were closed today in protest against the arrest of the students —P.T.I.

Imphal, February 15—The markets were closed for the third day in sympathy with the students About 6,000 students, led by girls of a local school, marched through the main streets demanding the release of those arrested.

Imphal, March 28—Students of Dhanamanjuri College who ended a six week's strike on February 18, have again decided to stay away from their classes. The students said their demands had not been fulfilled and that they would continue their strike until such time as the authorities acceded to them.—P.T.I.

From June to October, 1950, Gwalior, judging from the reports of the P.T.I. correspondent in that city, was living in a state of tension mingled with violence. Students were killed in police firings. The students demonstrated anew. Police were then stationed inside the Victoria College "following the demolition of memorials for the students killed." After this, P.T.I. reports processions, *lathi* charges, and arrests. Armed police patrol the city. The climax comes on August 12, when P.T.I. says:

TEAR GAS USED ON STUDENTS' PROCESSION

CURFEW RE-IMPOSED IN GWALIOR

Gwalior, August 12—The police today used tear gas to disperse a procession of students in the Sarrafa area of the city. The students were marching from the Victoria College where they had gathered immediately on the relaxation of the curfew at 2 p.m. to pay homage to the memory of their comrades killed in police firing on August 9. A 15-hour curfew was re-imposed at 5 p.m. Armed police and military are patrolling the city. Immediately after the re-imposition of curfew, the police fired a few shots in the air to scare away a crowd which had collected in the Sarrafa area. Two cases of fatal stabbing were reported last night after the city had been quiet for 30 hours.

INQUIRY TO BE HELD

The Madhya Bharat Government tonight announced their decision to hold an inquiry into the police firing on Wednesday in which two students were killed. They have appointed an official of the Government of India for the purpose. If after this preliminary inquiry it were found that the firing was unjustified, the Government would entrust the matter to a High Court judge for a judicial inquiry. The

Government have also decided to appoint a committee to inquire into the grievances of the college students relating to inadequate hostel accommodation and other matters. The Rajpramukh today appealed to the people to give wholehearted co-operation to the Government in maintaining peace.

Five weeks later there was still trouble in Gwalior. On September 16, the police made a *lathi* charge and used tear gas against a procession of defiant students. Nine persons, including Mr. H. Dwivedi, an opposition member of the Legislature, were arrested.

Between July 10 and August 24, 1951, the *Statesman* published sixteen P.T.I. items filling 105½ inches, reporting six weeks of chaos in Cuttack, the capital of Orissa state. On July 10, the students of Ravenshaw College struck against the state government's decision to raise tuition and hostel fees by 25 per cent. The "Council of Action" called on students throughout the state to join in sympathetic strike. On July 11, students of three Cuttack colleges demonstrated in front of the Legislative Assembly, shouting slogans as members of the cabinet entered the building. The Education Minister told the press that even after the 25 per cent increase Cuttack fees would be lower than those in Madras, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. On July 15, the government advised college principals to warn the students that all those not attending classes would be expelled and their places filled. Six thousand students in sixteen colleges were on strike. By July 17, the number had risen to 8,000, and students were offering *satyagraha* outside the legislature. The Chief Minister, anxious to avoid provocation, did not summon the police, with the result that members of the Legislature were prevented from entering the building; the session could not be held. The students had thus brought the entire business of the state to a standstill. Ravenshaw College expelled all students who had been continuously absent since July 11. Meanwhile, the trouble had spread to other parts of the state, and students were involved in clashes in various places.

The climax came on July 19 when P.T.I. reported:

MANY HURT IN CUTTACK DISTURBANCES
STUDENTS' PICKETS *LATHI*-CHARGED

Cuttack, July 19—Eighty-three persons, including four policemen, were injured, three seriously, in disturbances today near the Orissa Assembly and Ravenshaw College. The General Hospital reported that 68 persons, mostly students, have been treated in the hospital and 11 of them have been admitted as in-patients. The condition of two is stated to be serious.

Student strikers picketing at the Assembly gates on the tenth day of their strike, in protest against raising tuition fees, were *lathi* charged by the police, who were trying to clear a passage at the main gate so that M.L.A s could enter. The strikers retaliated by throwing brick-bats at the police... There were further demonstrations later.

Two police officers fired three rounds from their revolvers in self-defence when they were caught in mobs at two different places. One person was admitted to hospital with a bullet wound.

Demonstrators set fire to the police information box situated on the main road near Ravenshaw College and contingents of the Orissa Military Police were summoned and posted at strategic spots near the college. In a fresh incident, three police constables were stated to have been seriously injured

ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED

As a result of the disturbances, the Orissa Assembly was adjourned to July 25 after it had passed the Orissa Board of Revenue Bill... The Ministers and M L A s were escorted to their homes by strong Military Police guards.

COMMUNISTS BLAMED

It was officially alleged tonight that the picketing was resorted to by the students at the instigation of Communists, and that a large number of persons "especially brought from the Communist areas of Sankarpur and Patia" were among those who assembled at the college gates...

On July 21 P.T.I. reported:

STUDENT LEADERS ARRESTED
COLLEGES CLOSED IN ORISSA

Cuttack, July 21—Cuttack is now returning to normal, The strike of schoolboys continues but the small processions which were noticed all over the town yesterday were not seen today. Mobile units of the Orissa Military Police are patrolling the streets. The Director of Public Instruction has asked the High Schools of Cuttack to close down for one week from Monday.

The president of the students' "Council of Action", with three other members, went today to the residence of the Chief Minister and announced that they would go on hunger-strike there in protest against the Government's policy towards the students' demands. They were taken into custody by the Police and sent to Cuttack jail.

The police are now busy rounding up persons alleged to be connected with Thursday's incidents. Altogether 120 arrests had been made up to the early hours of this morning, mostly in the "Communist area" of Sankarpur. . Out of 120 treated for injuries on Thursday about 40 were students.

Our Correspondent in Cuttack writes: The strike wave among students has spread to high schools of Cuttack and many other places in Orissa. Principals of 13 out of 14 colleges in the state have issued notifications closing down their institutions

The Orissa Government no longer considers this strike wave to be a students' affair but an organised effort of a Leftist party to "use

students as pawns" in their political game to bring about disorders in the state... A *hartal* was observed in Cuttack and several other towns yesterday.

On July 13, there was a full-scale debate in the Legislature on the disturbances which secured a double column headline in the *Statesman*. By August 2, calm had been restored, and colleges and schools re-opened throughout the state. As a happy anti-climax all those expelled were re-admitted on paying a fine of Re. 1/-

Between May and October, 1951, the *Statesman* published 18 news items filling 103 column inches including photographs, concerning the boycott of their final examinations by Calcutta B.Com. and medical students.

The medical students broke into the news first when seventy of them besieged the Syndicate in the Vice-Chancellor's office for 12 hours ending with the intervention of the police at 4 a.m. They demanded that the final M.B., B.S. examination be postponed for a fortnight on the ground that students had not completed the syllabus. The Syndicate replied that the dates had been fixed one month previously, and that there was no valid reason for postponing them. The University's 700 medical students then declared a boycott of the examination and on May 28 forcibly prevented some who wished to attend from doing so. On June 2, the "down pens" fever spread to the B.Com. finalists and the *Statesman* reported:

"STIFF" EXAM LEADS TO UPROAR
STUDENT GROUPS OPPOSE EACH OTHER

Calcutta University authorities decided on Friday evening to hold a fresh examination in advanced accountancy for the B.Com. degree after several sections of the students at different examination centres had earlier in the day complained about the "stiffness" of the paper. The date of the proposed examination will be announced soon. Those candidates who are satisfied with their answers in Friday's examination need not sit again.

The B.Com. examination was held up for some time at Surendranath College as a result of disorder created by students. When the paper was distributed, a number of examinees protested against its "stiffness". Shouting, they tried to persuade others not to sit for the examination. This was resented by a large number of other candidates and words were exchanged. During the uproar, some answer papers were torn and the doors of some rooms damaged. The invigilators intervened and brought the situation under control in about an hour.

After further arguments, demonstrations, and press conferences, seven medical students went on hunger strike on June 14 in the portico of the Calcutta University Senate Hall

in order to "impress upon the authorities the urgency of a speedy settlement" of the dispute over the final M.B., B.S., examination. The hunger strike was called off ten days later after one student's condition had been reported as "serious". Thereafter my cuttings become incomplete, but even five months later normality had not been restored, as the following item (dated October 6, 1951) shows:

DEMANDS OF MEDICAL STUDENTS SUPPORTED
UNIVERSITY ASKED TO END DEADLOCK

Representatives of students' organisations and college unions at a meeting held in Calcutta Medical College passed a resolution supporting the "just demand" of medical students who have been boycotting the M.B , B.S. examination which began on May 28. They asked the authorities to speedily end the deadlock. If not, they said that the students might be forced to take desperate measures "for which the entire responsibility will lie with the authorities"

By another resolution, the meeting asked the University to fix a date for the M.B., B S. examination a month from the date of settlement of the dispute. The demand for a non-official enquiry into the medical education system of Calcutta University was also reiterated.

Press reports from Lucknow reveal constant lawless behaviour among the students throughout the five years 1948-1952. There are repeated incidents of ticketless travel by students. In September, 1948, there was trouble when the railway magistrate fined students for travelling first class between Lucknow and Kanpur without tickets; students invaded the railway station and mobbed the magistrate, who escaped by a side exit. Other items reveal students quick to resent attempts by police, magistrates, or other officials, to uphold law and order against student offenders. Gang methods of beating up frequently follow such attempts.

An affair which "rocked" Lucknow and caused what the *Statesman*'s correspondent described as a "medical crisis" for about two months throughout the State, involving the cabinet and the Governor himself, was the disciplinary action taken by the University authorities following the death of a patient under an anaesthetic. Students were not concerned in this but came out on strike in protest against the sanctions taken against the offending doctors. The University authorities then charged certain teachers with instigating the students to strike and endeavoured to take further disciplinary action against them on this score. This story was front page news in Lucknow throughout September, 1952.

Other Lucknow reports reveal students creating incidents at cinemas in order to enforce their claims for concessional

rates or even for free admission. As costs rose under the slow inflation which gripped India during these years, the students resisted all attempts to increase fees. Threats and assaults on invigilators who tried to stop cheating at examinations also feature in the news: the death of Principal Garg was but the most notorious case out of seven teachers murdered in these years. Finally, we hear of unseemly conduct on the streets towards women, and of hooliganism at fairs and other public festivities.

There were similar reports from all over India. On July 25, 1951, P.T.I. reported from Baripada that the strike of the local college had spread to the high school. On September 20, 1951, we read of a strike at Burdwan Raj College. On December 6, 1951, the Rani Parvatidevi College of Belgaum closed indefinitely following a strike by the students who demanded the suspension of the head clerk because he had demanded arrears of fees from two students "in an insulting manner." This clerk certainly seems to have been unpopular because no fewer than seven professors resigned in sympathy with the students. On April 21, 1951, 600 students of Allahabad University walked out of the B.A. final examination, protesting that the papers were too stiff. Expulsion orders were issued against the leaders.

On December 7, 1951, P.T.I. reported that, over 3,000 students of Baroda University were away from their classes in protest against the dismissal of two students of the School of Social Work on the ground that their progress was "unsatisfactory" during their first term. On December, 11, P.T.I. reported that the two dismissed students were to be re-admitted immediately.

And I have cuttings from Amritsar, Jammu, Jubbulpore, Bombay, Delhi and elsewhere.

Nor is it only students who strike. On November 22, 1951, the teachers of the Naveen Vidyabhavan High School struck in protest against two months' arrears of salary. On December 22, 1951, nine teachers of the Kanpur District Board primary schools went on hunger strike in protest against three months' arrears of salary. On the same date 10,000 teachers all over Bihar state struck against insufficient salaries.

Note that the cuttings that I was able to make were the result of but three hours' gleanings from an incomplete file of the *Statesman*. Had I combed its columns in detail and those of other papers as well, I could have indefinitely swollen

my collection. But my object was to obtain an over-all picture, not exhaustive statistics.

The over-all picture is deplorable.

India's universities contain two hundred thousand boys and girls who, as students of higher learning, must be presumed to represent the flower of the nation. The contrast in the experience provided for the Western adolescent and that which overtakes the Indian on the threshold of life could not be greater. Instead of self-development through the joy of satisfying natural instincts in surroundings that make for social behaviour and for co-operation with authority and with their fellows, India's adolescents from the age of fifteen upwards, are plunged into a vortex in which a large part of their youthful energies are exhausted in anti-social ways. They learn that those in authority—the university heads, the state government and legislature, the forces of law and order—are their natural enemies, to be defied and outwitted. It is demonstrated to them that the world is a brutal place, in which there is no justice for the poor and the downtrodden, with whom they identify themselves, but only a blind and repressive "law" upheld by *lathis* and rifles. There is no experience so embittering as a bloody clash between police and civil population. The people are *ex-hypothesi* gathered together to promote some cause which they regard as just; the police who charge and fire have no alternative but to obey their orders and do their duty. Each side feels both self-righteous and victimised. The return of calm does not restore the *status quo ante* but a body politic which has suffered disintegration to the extent of the resentment aroused. The physical conflict has ceased but a festering psychological wound remains. As a foreign correspondent, I was eye-witness of many riots and police charges in France between 1932 and 1937, and I can testify that the organisers of those riots (for there is no riot without an organiser) contributed powerfully to the widening of the social divisions that led to the collapse of France in 1940.

Glance back over the newspaper reports cited in the previous pages. Consider the days, weeks and months, of interruptions to studies—the wasted time, the precious time of fleeting youth. Consider the emotional shocks to these boys and girls (many mere school children as my cuttings show) exposed to *lathis*, to bullets, to the cries of anger and pain and the sight of the blood of their companions stricken in the streets. Consider the false values and ideals instilled in these

adolescents when they find that they can set a whole town in an uproar for weeks on end, when their "statements," their deeds, and their photographs, occupy the front pages day after day. A whole town? They brought the public affairs of a whole state to a standstill. They forced one state to ask for the loan of troops from another; they have found themselves flattered by the political opposition, and instigated by their own professors to defy the University authorities in a quarrel in which students had no concern.

Boys and girls who have spent three or four of their formative years living through such chaotic scenes, weltering in such destructive emotions, are likely to emerge with deep psychological wounds; they must feel victimised by society; they will be on the look out for wrongs to resent; they will regard their government and the institutions in which it is embodied as their natural enemies; to them, rebellion will be normal, constitutional development abnormal. They will have been trained not in social co-operation but in obstruction; they will have no conception of duty save to uphold their own rights, and destroy all else.

What kind of leaders can such men and women become? One remembers the vengeance that the student-rebel Joseph Vissarionovich Djugashvilli exacted after he had helped to overthrow the society responsible for the miseries and persecutions of his youth, after he had liquidated his way to a dictator's throne: Stalin, the man of steel—a metal useful enough for building bridges but out of which human feelings cannot be forged.

WHO IS TO BLAME FOR INDISCIPLINE?

WHO is to blame for the hooliganism, for the strikes, arrests, and imprisonments courted? Do India's boys and girls differ from all others in the world? Do they suffer from some moral plague peculiar to themselves?

The causes of indiscipline are not difficult to disentangle. They are conveniently assembled for study in the evidence given by educationists from all over India before the University Education Commission of 1948/49.*

* The three volumes of this Report form one of the most remarkable studies of educational problems published in any country. The first volume, which contains the Commission's findings, reflections, and recommendations, is in the same class for readability, wisdom, and breadth of view, as the famous 1945 Harvard Committee Report, *General Education in a Free Society*, and deserves to be a best seller. Unfortunately, the manuscript of the second and third volumes, which contain invaluable evidence, appear to have been sent to the printers without editing. There is no index to subjects or to witnesses. The

1 Interior of a typical students' lodging house bedroom in Calcutta. Two students sleep, eat, and work here. Note street visible through window. Size of this room is about 6 × 6 feet

2 Second prize bedroom in Birla High School Hostel, Pilani



3. Children coming out of a Calcutta Corporation primary school



4 Entrance to a rural primary school under Birla Education Trust

5 Kitchen of a Calcutta students' lodging house Stove is under the hole in the roof top left Food is exposed to the dust One wonders how any cooking can be done here during the monsoon months



6 Restaurant in Pilani main block used by students and professors of all colleges

For our present purpose the key questions are XV on hostels, XVI on extra-curricular activities, and XVII on health.

INADEQUATE RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

Question XV asked whether the witnesses considered residential facilities adequate. Of the fifty-seven witnesses who answered, two gave favourable reports. Four thought them "fairly satisfactory". But no fewer than fifty-one were dissatisfied. Here is some typical evidence:

The Allahabad University Teachers' Association stated that Allahabad hostels had accommodation for only 2,000 out of a total 4,500 students, and continued:

> ...In hostels, the size of rooms is 10 by 11 feet to 12 by 14 feet. Originally single, they have now been made double to meet the increasing rush of students every year. Even hostel halls have been turned into rooms by the erection of partitions, thus cutting at the root of a common social and intellectual life in the hostels For messing, no satisfactory arrangements exist Most popular is the "Maharajas" contract system: one cook supplies two meals a day to 10 to 15 students and charges Rs 30/- to Rs. 40/- a month (without *ghee*). The food served is miserable and not always wholesome.

Lt. Col. Amir Chand stated:

> The facilities for residence of students in the University towns are wholly inadequate. The college kitchens are managed by the students themselves which means that they are managed by the servants, students taking very little interest in them. Consequently the costs are very high and the meals provided are unsatisfactory regarding the range of food and the selection of proper foodstuffs. The running of kitchens is specialised work and should be undertaken by trained caterers who should be on the staff of the college.

Mr. M. Lakshminarasimhiah stated:

> , But the hardships of the poor students are unimaginable. They live in households which may not have even a room. Sometimes three or four students together engage a room which may not command the minimum amenities of water and electric light...

This evidence suggests that a minority of India's students find accommodation in officially conducted hostels and that conditions in these are for the most part thoroughly unsatisfactory. But what happens to those who cannot even get

names of witnesses are given without stating from which universities or colleges they came, nor are their subjects or designations given The answers to the questions listed in the first 23 pages of Volume II are scattered through the following 1,300 pages of Volumes II and III without means of finding them save by turning over each page: there is no guiding list of contents But anyone who has the patience to master the maze will be well rewarded.

into these hostels? Some live at home. Others are taken in by relatives or friends. But the majority must fend for themselves. Providing lodgings for inexperienced and penniless youths has become a racket in the slum areas of university towns. Students live in filth and misery, without proper food or care for their health, in circumstances in which many an initially guileless boy becomes habituated to prostitutes, pimps, *goondas*, and other anti-social characters, who make him cynically familiar with crime and with violence.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR FACILITIES

Question XVI asks whether witnesses are satisfied with the facilities offered for extra-curricular activities. Of the thirty-one witnesses who answered, three were satisfied, two were vague, and twenty-six were dissatisfied. Here is some typical evidence:

The Delhi University Teachers' Association stated:

> No. There is a very small percentage of students which takes any part in these activities. A vast majority is indifferent. The undue importance which the examination occupies at present is one of the reasons. Other reasons are the long distances from which the students and teachers have to come, unsatisfactory buildings, want of playgrounds, premises, etc.

Dr. P. V. Mahamahopadhyaya Kane stated:

> There are hardly any extra-curricular activities for students in Bombay University, except being members of the National Cadet Corps. There are some debating unions in some colleges but none in the University as a whole and I am not in favour of having a debating union for the University until discipline among the students improves a great deal.

Mr. G. D. Sondhi stated:

> There is too little provision or even encouragement for these. There is hardly any attention paid to Fine Arts, Drama, Music ; games, and sports facilities are quite inadequate and there is not enough diversity in those that are provided. Hiking and mountaineering, camping, etc. are absent.

THE ROLE OF STUDENT UNIONS

Question XVI (3) asked whether students' debating unions were functioning properly. Of the thirty-five witnesses who answered, six were satisfied, two were vague, and twenty-seven were dissatisfied. Here is some typical evidence.

Mr. D. R. Bhattacharya stated:

> ...Every student has to pay Rs. 2/- for the session, which means the Union gets a sum of Rs. 8,000/- at their disposal, which

is generally spent in inviting Communist and Socialist leaders and giving them tea and entertainment...

Mr. Ali Yawar Jung stated:

..Apart from the temperamental difficulty that controversial subjects are not usually treated academically by the students, there is a marked tendency on the part of the Union executives to regard themselves as 'Cabinets' and the Union itself as a kind of guild or trade union for so-called students' rights or grievances. Such Unions provide good grounds for political wire-pulling from outside, and students themselves, in contesting elections, exult in formulating extreme demands and promising fulfilment. The Unions are apt to treat debates as the last part of their functions.

Dr. S. G. Mannawalla stated:

No. Because Trade Union tendencies have begun to colour the activities of the University Union, often resulting in mass action. In most colleges and in this University, the Union has compulsory membership for all students. Office-bearers have been encouraged to establish the view that they represent the entire strength of students, and that has led to a policy of dictation by the Executive of the Union The Executive of the Union are often contacted by political parties for their own purposes. The Unions have ceased to be truly academic and have developed political tendencies in their activities.

HEALTH AND GAMES

One of the most enlightening questions put by the Commission was XVII which covered health, physical training and medical care.

Question XVII (1) asked: Are you satisfied with the present arrangements for physical education and games in the universities? Of the forty-nine replies, one is not clear, twelve are more or less satisfied, and thirty-six are dissatisfied. Here are some typical answers:

The Allahabad University Teachers' Association stated:

Physical training is compulsory for all B A. first year students except those who join the National Cadet Corps. Hostel students have P T. in the morning thrice a week. Delegacy students attend P.T. classes from 1.30 p.m. onwards in the gymnasium thrice a week. P.T. classes are not often taken seriously by the students. There is a swimming pool but it is often without water. There is no proper, well-equipped, or attractive gymnasium. There is Yamuna, but it needs boats and other equipment. There are University teams in football, cricket, hockey, tennis, badminton, squash racket, and volley ball, each looked after by a Committee. Interest in sports is keen but not widespread. For a large majority of students there is no arrangement for games in the university, though every student has to pay a games fee.

Mr. Ali Yawar Jung stated:

No. There are various deficiencies, like absence of good coaches, the poverty of the students which makes it necessary for the University to supply them with sticks, bats, and even boots, and the little attention bestowed on games especially during the school stages. Physical instruction, wherever compulsory, seldom takes into account that in some cases it may be harmful (and the same with games). On the other hand, if these are not made compulsory, the general backwardness and lack of interest is sure to result in few taking part. The whole of these activities require to be co-ordinated very closely with medical examination and the regulation even of diet. While there is difficulty with regard to the non-resident students, even those who are residents in hostels do not take sufficient interest in games and sports...

Dr. N. N. Sinha stated:

...We have in this University made physical education, in the form of morning drill for half an hour, compulsory for all men students in the undergraduate classes. There are no special facilities provided for hostel students. But my objection to compulsory physical training is that nobody bothers to find out if the students get two good meals a day. Physical training yields good results if students get good food. Most of our men students come from very poor families. Even those who live in hostels do not get good food because most of them cannot afford it...

LACK OF MEDICAL CARE

Question XVII (5) asked: Is there adequate provision for (a) periodical medical inspection of students, (b) medical attendance in cases of illness, and (c) a well-equipped dispensary? Of the thirty-seven replies, seven were satisfied, twenty-seven dissatisfied, and three vague. Here are some typical answers:

Mr. G. V. K. Iyenger stated:

This is becoming a farce, because the doctor has to examine too many students and he is not paid for it. (b) and (c) yes.

The Medical Council of India, New Delhi, stated:

Periodical medical inspection of students is not provided for in all institutions. In some, students are examined only once and that too hurriedly. There is hardly ever a re-examination. (b) Medical attendance in cases of illness is not very satisfactory except when, as in the case of Lucknow University, there is an attached college hospital. (c) The dispensaries are constantly starved for equipment and supplies.

Mr. C. Joshi Pradyumna stated:

...No amount of training can replace the need of a thorough medical examination of boys. It is at present, where it exists, entirely

formal and valueless. Before any student is admitted into a course of physical training, a medical check-up is necessary. Provision for exemption is deceptive in so far as the authorities shirk their positive obligation to admit those who are fit, and encourage false pleas for avoidance of the training. Running such classes this year, and having had the occasion to examine the medical report on the health of students last year during the term of Principalship, I found several cases where physical education would have been definitely injurious, though a special treatment could make those boys physically fit. In many cases it is the poverty of the parents and the careless advice of the medical men which is at the root of the physical and nutritional deficiencies of the growing generation. It is very necessary that the health reports are made more reliable and an active crusade launched against malnutrition and disease.

UNIVERSITY COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS

WHAT CONCLUSIONS does the University Commission draw from the foregoing evidence?

The Commission observes that the problem of medical care in a university derives from the state of the nation as a whole and in explanation quotes the following paragraph from the Report of the Health Survey and Development Committee:

> At least 100 million persons suffer from malaria every year, and the annual mortality for which the disease is responsible, either directly or indirectly, is about 2 millions. About 2 5 million active cases of tuberculosis exist in the country and 500,000 deaths take place each year from this cause alone. The common infectious diseases, namely cholera, small-pox and plague, are also responsible for a large amount of morbidity and mortality, the extent of which varies from year to year. Among the different countries of the world for which statistics are available, India ranks high as one of the largest reservoirs of infection in respect of all three. These and the other two are all preventible diseases and their incidence should have been brought under effective control long ago. In addition, endemic diseases, such as leprosy, filariasis, guinea-worm, and hook-worm diseases, are responsible for a considerable amount of morbidity in the country, although their contribution to mortality is relatively small.

The universities draw their students from a cross-section of the population, "and in the light of the above facts," says the Commission:

> .. it is little short of criminal to permit young people to mingle in the close contacts of college life without taking the steps which are necessary to promote health and check the spread of contagious diseases.

The Commission continues:

> *Medical Examination*—Most universities and colleges visited by the Commission claimed to have some kind of physical check-up with

preventive and corrective measures, but it is fair to say that these programmes, with a few exceptions, exist largely on paper and the authorities frankly admit that the administration of them is a fiction...

After laying down the elementary propositions that every university should have a hospital and a qualified staff, that students suffering from infectious, chronic, or endemic diseases "should be denied matriculation unless the university has facilities for isolating and treating those who may have curable diseases", the Commission says:

We reiterate that the omission of these recommendations is nothing short of inhumanity to the afflicted students, a social menace to the other students...

The Commision records that about 80 per cent of India's population suffer from malnutrition, and recommends that university kitchens should be in charge of trained dieticians, since under-nourished students cannot do good work. The Commission urges:

...In the case of students living in off-campus lodgings, unless proper food is provided, such places should be dropped from the approved list. This calls for regular periodic inspection. In this connection, all persons handling food, both in hostels and off-campus dining halls, should be subjected to physical examination, and no one with an infectious disease should be employed or permitted to continue if they become infected. We visited kitchens which were insanitary and unfit for the preparation of wholesome food. Likewise there is lack of convenient lavatories in some places where the food-handlers can keep themselves clean.

The Commission continues:

...Even the above measures cannot improve the health and living conditions of all students. Many suffer from poverty, sometimes in an extreme form. They do not receive adequate food at home or they are struggling for an education on insufficient means of their own. We suggest that in colleges where a considerable proportion of the students are poor or are living on slender resources, the noon meal could be furnished to students who are non-resident.

After making recommendations covering recreation, physical education, and games, the Commission concludes:

Importance of Living Conditions.—No single factor has a more vital effect upon the atmosphere and morale of a college or a university than the prevalent conditions under which students live. Convenient and comfortable quarters for study and sleep, sufficient and wholesome food at low cost, are essential to good spirit and the best progress in the university work.

These conditions may be found where students are housed in hostels properly organised, equipped, and supervised. Unfortunately most universities and colleges in India do not have adequate residential

and dining facilities. As a rule only a small fraction of the students find accommodation in hostels.

Deplorable Conditions.—We visited colleges with enrolments running over 5,000 students which had no provision whatsoever for residential accommodation. Such conditions are deplorable in the extreme ..

At one university, students were expected to furnish their own beds or sleep on the floor. Even women students were subjected to this practice. Apart from other questions involved, such conditions create a most undesirable social attitude on the part of the occupants of a room in which it occurs.

...The most crucial test of good hostels pertains to the dining facilities. If armies march on their stomachs, students live and die with theirs Poor and unwholesome food not only breeds malnutrition and disease but can become a centre of seething discontent. The boarding arrangements tie up closely with discipline or indiscipline...

The Hostel is a Part of Education.—The hostel is not simply a place to eat and sleep or even study, though these are indispensable. Living in a hostel is an important part of education, it is a way of life, and here students learn to live decently or indifferently or in uncouth fashion...

...Most students of our universities live outside the campus compound. This is in itself a misfortune, but the unfortunate aspects are heightened by the unsuitable conditions in which many students are required to live, particularly in congested localities. Some of the habitations are unfit either from a sanitary or social point of view, or both Students are sometimes the helpless victims of mercenary or even unscrupulous landlords. All too frequently students living in lodgings and outside residences lack the opportunities of corporate life which hostels, playgrounds, and common rooms afford

...Without social recreation, games, and common rooms, the students are not only deprived of much of the benefits of education but the students' spirit of university may be demoralized.

CAUSES OF INDISCIPLINE

On the question of discipline the Commission observes:

Other witnesses cited the period of the struggle for national independence, in which students and staff were called upon by political leaders to engage in agitation, as a general cause of indiscipline carried over to the present. Such action may have served a patriotic purpose in an all-out drive for national freedom, but such practices now have a reverse effect—they promote confusion and become a serious impediment to national solidarity and integration

Anarchial Elements Exploit Students—Unfortunately some political cliques and even anarchial elements are continuing to exploit college students for their own purposes. During the visit of the Commission to Calcutta, a riot was started in which students were apparently used as pawns and which issued in bloodshed and lawlessness that continued for two or three days This disorder was the work of antisocial and violent elements, and neither the university nor students could be held responsible.

Causes of Indiscipline are Varied—Among the most general though indirect causes often cited by our witnesses were meagre finances and consequent lack of amenities required for healthy college life. Closely related is the economic distress of some of the institutions which lack the means to provide adequate hostels and comfortable living conditions, playgrounds and desirable corporate activities for students. The masses of students, the failure of parents at times to support the college authorities, the inability of the teachers to cope with confused thinking, admission of students without the intelligence or industry requisite for successful study, tensions over examinations which unfortunately dominate the educational system, financial worry caused to poor students by the cost of university education—all these contribute to the difficulties of maintaining the best conduct and welfare of students.

Constructive Approaches to the Solution of Disciplinary and Allied Problems—The key to the successful handling of young people is not found nowadays in a multitude of restraints and reprimands or in the infliction of continuous penalties. These devices may have to be resorted to in extreme cases but a wholesome student attitude and life cannot be created by negative and repressive measures. The true sanction of discipline lies in the development of the social conscience of the undergraduate body as a whole rather than in punitive measures or precautionary vigilance. As in society so in the university laws are observed because they are approved by reason rather than because they are imposed by force. Indiscipline should be terminated by the good sense of the students...

LOW STANDARDS OF EDUCATION

In the light of the foregoing evidence, it is not surprising that Indian educational standards are low. How can ill-paid teachers, and ill-fed, ill-housed, and uncared-for students, seething with discontent, working amidst frequent and often prolonged interruptions, achieve high standards?

The Commission gives a statistical table showing that the percentage of failures at the intermediate examinations in the years 1944-48 at seven representative universities averaged 47.1 per cent. The Commission comments:

That the annual wastage due to failures ranges from 37.5 per cent to 60 per cent is staggering, if we bear in mind the fact that the intermediate examination is preceded by a similar process of screening two years earlier at the high school stage. But even with this high percentage of failures, the average standard of teaching and examinations is not high enough, since we know that the minimum marks required for a pass are only 33 per cent and that a large majority of candidates pass in the third division. There is little doubt that this enormous wastage is due firstly, to the large number of unsuitable entrants coming to the intermediate classes, secondly, to the poor average quality of teaching provided in the intermediate classes, and thirdly, to the laziness of, or insufficient work put in by, the students themselves.

Annual Wastage of the Intermediate Examination—That the annual wastage at the intermediate examination is so inordinately large

and must be avoided has not been adequately realised either by the teachers or by parents, or by the Government which directly or indirectly finances intermediate and university education to a large extent A deplorable wastage of public funds goes on year after year, but what is worse, there is an unconcerned complacency about this serious loss of public funds on the one hand, and waste of time, energy and funds of students and their parents, besides terrible frustrations of their hopes and aspirations on the other. Secondly schools and intermediate colleges form the foundations of university work. Any re-organization of our universities without a corresponding improvement in school and intermediate college teaching will not produce the hoped for results Our high school and intermediate standards are undoubtedly low, and in order to improve them we should not only exact a higher standard in these examinations but also considerably improve our teaching We cannot raise examination standards unless we improve the quality of teaching first.

Causes of Low Standards in Schools and Intermediate Colleges— Our schools and intermediate colleges are congested and under-staffed, and teachers are so ill-paid that generally only those graduates who fail to enter any other profession take to teaching as a last resort Very few school teachers have a call for or take pride in their profession. Secondary education only improves if a large number of first-rate graduates become schoolmasters.

If we attain high standards in our high schools and intermediate colleges, there should be less need for a large number of students to enter the universities at all ... The real need is to be able to offer salaries and prospects which will attract persons of first class ability for our schools

After reading the factual reports of the P.T.I. the evidence given before the University Commission, and the views of the Commission itself, I do not think that anyone will find it in their hearts to blame India's boys and girls for their indiscipline; on the contrary, one feels indignant at the facile editorial and other castigations that they receive following each fresh incident that strikes the headlines

INDIA, DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

INDIA'S EDUCATIONAL DIFFICULTIES may be easier to understand, and to sympathise with, if seen in the perspective of history.*

* Those familiar with the history of education in India may criticise this section as full of generalisations that need qualification No one is more conscious than I of the ellipses, but I suggest that they are not misleading unless the reader wishes to use them to engage in the popular pastime of justifying or blaming Indian or British educationists of the past This is profitless Civil servants of the nineteenth century did their average best. They were sometimes right, as often they were mistaken because they shared the misconceptions of their time. Praise or blame involves hindsight which may be flattering to present prejudices, but is historically worthless The only generalisation which never needs qualification is the proposition that our forebears builded better than they knew if we have the *nous* to profit by what we can see to have been their mistakes, in which case they were not mistakes but straw for our bricks

The traditional Indian literary education* was not able to withstand the impact of Western civilisation that spread slowly throughout the sub-continent from the first decade of the nineteenth century. The pressure of educated Indian opinion, led by men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), founder of the Brahmo Samaj and "Father of Modern India", who saw the value to India (a) of Western science and (b) of a synthesis of Indian and Western culture, together with the East India Company's need for a growing number of officials who knew English and understood Western methods, combined to promote the rapid growth of Western education in India.

But the education that was launched in good faith and embraced with fervour in nineteenth-century India was essentially adapted to the needs of people living in a western industrialised civilisation. In so far as it was suited to India, it was adapted to the comparatively limited numbers who could be absorbed into the various branches of government service under British rule. I can find no statistics giving the total number of persons in administrative, professional, and other middle-class employment, but by 1949 the number of factory workers was only 2,434,691 out of a population of 356,890,000 (1951 census). These figures suggest the relatively small amount of employment that industry provides even today in the Indian scene as a whole, and without attempting a guess at the numbers of those who have received a literary education who are employed in government services, industry, and the professions, it seems safe to assume that the output has hitherto exceeded the demand. If the population had remained steady the growth of industry might have absorbed the output, but the British enforcement of peace and reduction of effects of famine and pestilence caused the population spectacularly to outstrip the pace of industrial growth.

Another weakness of the educational system launched in the nineteenth century was that, instead of attempting to work out the synthesis between the cultures of India and the West that Ram Mohan Roy had advocated, it sought to substitute Western for Indian culture. In this it attained some success and thus created a class of "educated" Indians divorced from their own people in sympathy and outlook. Although the emergence from the last quarter of the nineteenth century

* If there are still any who subscribe to the theory that there was no education in pre-British India, they should read *Indian Educaton in Ancient and Later Times* by F. E Keay, and Nurrullah and Naik's *History of Education in India.*

onwards of Indian-owned schools which set out to rehabilitate Indian culture, and to synthesise it with the West, was a big step in the right direction, their influence has not yet been strong enough to rectify the balance. The existence of substantial numbers of westernised, intellectually uprooted, unemployed Indians has therefore been a factor contributing to the discontent and frustration that has through the years increasingly gathered at the centres of higher education.

One of the worst results of the pressure of the population combined with the scarcity of jobs available for the educated is that teachers have forgotten, and students have no chance of discovering, what the object of education is. To both alike, that object presents itself as passing an examination in hopes of ensuring a living. The anger of the Calcutta Medical and B.Com. students at what they considered the excessive stiffness of their papers raises an incredulous laugh from a foreign observer—what are examination papers for, if not to be stiff? is the confident attitude of the Oxford honours candidate—but against the background of India's poverty, the possibility of failure to secure a degree becomes terrifying, for even with a degree there are scores of applicants for every vacancy.

Overcrowding renders good teaching impossible; at the same time, the pressure of student opinion is always towards lowering standards further, and many authorities find it, on compassionate grounds, difficult to deny them. But just how poor an impression Indian standards make on foreign observers is not always realised. Here is an example: One university's syllabus for Economics in 1951 gave an exhaustive analysis of the economic knowledge required for the B.A., covering no less than nine pages. Yet the books listed as required reading were only eight: Thomas' *Elements;* Benham's *Introduction;* Bhatnagar's *Elements;* Sen & Dass' *Introduction;* Mathur's *Money, Exchange, and Banking;* Wadia & Merchant's *Our Economic Problem;* Saxena & Mathur's *Readings in Indian Economics;* and, presumably as a source of facts and statistics, the *Indian Year Book.* A foreign observer's first reaction is wonder that a student requires two years to study seven elementary text-books, which an undergraduate in the London School of Economics would be expected to assimilate in, say, four months, as a preliminary to tackling real economics. Is it really imagined in India that a student who passes in these books, even with the highest honours, is an economist? The Oxford University regulations

give as comprehensive a syllabus as this Indian University, but they do not prescribe one book, and they lay down that students are expected to be familiar with the latest contributions to the science made in the specialist economic periodicals. This means that there can be no complaint that any question set is "unfair" or "too stiff" because the onus is on the candidate to keep himself abreast of the latest developments in the most advanced regions of his subject.

The questions set in the papers of the Indian university referred to are also apt to be static and backward-looking. A typical question "What are the factors which determine the rate of interest?" invites a reply in old-fashioned terms learnt by heart from text-books without reference to current problems. To my mind, this question might better have been worded: "Aghast by what he sees in the contemporary economic scene, Mr. Gladstone's ghost has taken to haunting the Ministry of Finance in New Delhi. In order to allay the ensuing alarm and despondency, India's Finance Minister tries to set Mr. Gladstone's spirit at rest by explaining the difference in the factors which determined the rate of interest in capitalist, free-enterprise, free-trade Britain in 1870, and in the highly-taxed protectionist, welfare India of today: (a) What did the Finance Minister say? (b) What retorts did Mr. Gladstone's ghost make?"

When, however, one remembers the reserves of vitality and imagination at the command of the adequately fed and housed British student and the devitalising conditions with which the Indian has to contend, one realises that any comparison between the two is unrealistic.

To understand all is to forgive all, but it does not relieve one's anxiety about the future of India. For, while the responsibilities of the citizen of a totalitarian state are fully discharged by keeping his opinion to himself and avoiding trouble with Secret Police, the citizen of a democracy must understand and pronounce judgment on what is going on, and must bear his share of responsibility for his country's success or failure, which means that there will be a relation between the level of his education and the welfare of his country. Any fool can be a totalitarian; it takes an educated man to be a democrat.

If Indian democracy is to survive, the educational system must be overhauled in two ways:

(1) Money must be spent in order to reduce the evils described in the previous section.

(2) The aims of education must be re-defined. The existing system was largely created to supply the needs of a bureaucratic regime. It cannot meet the requirements of men and women called upon to be self-governing citizens.

The financial recommendations made by the University Education Commission cover teacher's salaries, libraries, hostel accommodation, etc., and involve a five-year programme requiring an increased annual expenditure by the government of Rs. 100,000,000 which is 2.5 per cent of the 1953-54 federal budget estimates. If the Commission's recommendations were implemented, Indian education would be greatly improved in five years and transformed in ten. The Commission reported in 1949, "and," says the Government of India's publicity pamphlet *Since Independence,* "those of its recommendations which do not entail heavy expenditure have been taken in hand for early execution." The same pamphlet reveals that the "modest sum of Rs. 13.6 millions earmarked" for education in 1949-50 had, by 1950-51 been reduced to Rs. 1.42 millions.

The trouble about education is that while everyone pays lip service to its importance, only a handful of people understand why it is important. It is a sad reflection on the level of education throughout the world that increased expenditure on defence can usually be pushed through any legislature with the approval of public opinion, whereas money spent on education is grudged and is the first to be pared in an emergency.

Yet if education is a democracy's first line of defence, few people trace the good or the evil that goes on around them to its educational origin. When reflecting, for example, over the divisive factors in India, critics usually think first of castes, creeds, and languages, and they are indeed important, but it will, I hope, strike all who have read the previous section on indiscipline that the conditions therein described are at least as powerful causes of the intrigues and the factions that characterise so many Indian institutions, ranging from social clubs, to the Congress party, and the ministries of the state governments. Here, for example, is an extract from the *Eastern Economist* dated March 13, 1953:

PEPSU—THE END OF A FARCE

As in the Punjab (India) where President's rule was promulgated in 1951 to end an intolerable situation, a similar step has been found necessary in the Patiala and East Punjab States Union. The rivalries of the various political groups and the perpetually shifting allegiances

of the members of these groups have created a situation in which ordinary and orderly administration has become impossible. Sardar Gyan Singh Rarewala, who came to power as a result of such events in April, 1952, has himself become the victim of other manoeuvres. The Assembly has not been able to transact any legislative business and the second session of last year was only nominal and barely conformed to the letter of the Constitution but not its spirit.

Why are such intrigues so common? Why is it that the elections of officers to the European clubs of Calcutta go through smoothly, whereas flurries, canvassing, and storms in tea cups, mark the elections of some of their Indian contemporaries? The answer, cliques and faction, is further evidence of the failure of Indian schools and universities to educate fully social characters.

The persisting demand for foreign experts is only in part caused by the scarcity of technical "know-how". Character is an equally important scarcity, and the slowness with which some foreign business houses increase the numbers of their senior Indian staff is less due to any lingering racial prejudice than to the difficulty of obtaining enough men of the "right type"—by which they mean men capable of loyalty and leadership. Leadership does not mean shouting orders and bullying like a drill sergeant, but looking after your subordinates, standing between them and criticism, and knowing how to extract the best work from them for the sake of the common cause. The practical application of these generalisations is not learnt overnight, but is absorbed unconsciously out of continuing experiences in school and university which develop an attitude of mind. The evidence of the previous section suggests that such experiences are the exception in too many of India's schools, and the uncooperative behaviour of many politicians, party men, and members of diverse institutions, is one result of this educational gap.

The aims of education in all countries are: (a) to help young people to discover and develop their individual aptitudes—the unique contribution that each has to make to the whole—and (b) to fit them to play their part as responsible citizens, to cooperate with their fellows. Closely associated are the ideas of heritage and change. It is the teacher's task to introduce boys and girls to their cultural, social, and historical heritage, for this gives them ideals and sanctions for their conduct and leads them to accept their national customs and way of life; the story of the past explains the institutions and ideas of the present. As the Harvard University Report on *General Education in a Free Society*

observes: "It is impossible to escape the realisation that our society, like any other society, rests on common beliefs and that a major task of education is to perpetuate them." In other words, the young are given a point of view.

At the same time, the need for a common faith and grounds for action must be reconciled with the equally important need to try out new ideas, ways, and methods. Without a combination of the spirit of adventure and of the scientific attitude of trial and error, a civilisation perishes of hardening of the arteries.

What point of view is Indian education to endeavour to give its boys and girls?

The moment that this question is put one striking contrast between Indian and Western educational problems emerges. Indian literature reveals the Vedic Aryans to have been a free and easy, adventurous people, whose psychology reminds one of the Homeric Greeks, with whom they shared the civilisation of the early Indo-European peoples. But the subsequent development of those Aryan-speaking tribes who became Greeks and those who became Hindus differs in that the Brahmins succeeded in establishing control over the psychology and social structure of India, whereas the Greeks, untrammelled by a priestly caste, remained free to imagine, experiment, criticise, and find out by trial and error. Free institutions and democracy are part of the Western world's heritage from the Greeks. Absolute rule and virtually static society are part of India's heritage from the post-Vedic Brahmins. It is arguable that had India been able to rid herself of the trappings of absolute rule, in the realm of government as in the realm of thought, the scientific attitude of mind thus set free to assert itself would have given India the spiritual and material means successfully to resist British conquest, for the advantage that the British of the eighteenth century had over the Indians was that their education had been able to achieve a working reconciliation between the claims of heritage: the need for a common faith; and the claims of change: the readiness to experiment with new ideas and new techniques.*

* If India's history suggests a people dominated up to the time of foreign conquest by the heritage, or "conditioning", side of their education at the expense of the scientific, French history suggests the same proposition in reverse For the French are among the most intellectually brilliant in the world; their civilisation has not been retarded for lack of debate and experiment, but, in part at least, because the heritage side of their education has not been strong enough to bridge the divisions among Frenchmen and bind them together in strongly held common beliefs. Internal strife has dominated French history.

So that the first problem of Indian education is to effect a *rapprochement* between the heritage and the change sides. Again, the contrast between India's educational problems and those of Britain or America is striking, because, whereas the reconciliation of heritage and change in Britain and America amounts in each case to tightening the strands of the same national civilisation, in India it amounts to weaving together strands from different civilisations, since, in India, I take the heritage side to be largely Indian, whereas the change, scientific, or trial-and-error side, consists of Western ideas which have to be woven into the fabric of Hinduism, while at the same time the diversity of the religious, racial, and linguistic strands between Muslims, Hindus, Northerners and Dravidians, and speakers of Hindi, Bengali, or Telugu, present their own special problems of reconciliation in a common faith and outlook.

What common faith and outlook is to be found in India? The Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh assert that it lies in Hinduism itself—as England is for the English, so is India is for the Hindus. This is to ignore 80,000,000 Muslims, tribesmen, Christians, Parsis, and others. Treated as full citizens, each of these minority communities has a contribution to make to the Indian nation, which would not only be spiritually but materially weakened if Hindu discrimination forced the minorities, who total nearly a quarter of the population, into subversive or hostile attitudes. India is in fact no more for the Hindus than England is for the English. England's strength lies in being "for" the English, Scots, Welsh, Cornish, Irish, and all who are ready to play their part as citizens; since the war there has been a substantial influx of Polish and other refugees, who in a generation will be as "English" as anyone else. Like the Huguenot refugees of the seventeenth century, they add a new and vivid strand to England's ancient coat of many colours.

Still less can a common faith for the whole of India be found by appeal to regional loyalties, such as those of Bengal, Maharashtra, or Andhra—splendid varieties of India's heritage though these, and others, may in themselves be.

What is needed is a system of loyalties that stresses the common factors of culture and of material interest that should bind the peoples of the Indian Union, while at the same time respecting and delighting in the regional diver-

sities. Such a system cannot be based on totalitarian principles because the totalitarian seeks uniformity and abhors diversity and variety.* India's unity cannot be imposed by force; it can survive only by the consent of the governed. Finally, if it is to flourish, it must succeed in merging the heritage of India with the scientific outlook of the West.

One is forced to the conclusion that the common faith for which we are looking can only be democracy. Since the Indian republic professes to be a democracy, it may surprise some that I reach this conclusion with the air of one hastening to share a new discovery with an astonished world. It is true that at the time of writing India is a democracy, and it is my fervent hope that she will grow and prosper in democratic strength for centuries to come. If so, this will, I think, be the first successful example of the conscious adoption by one people of a political system (which implies a whole way of life in itself) from another people of a totally different tradition and civilisation. The Indian constitution grants every Indian, irrespective of caste or creed, the basic rights of democracy: "justice, social, economic, and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship; equality of status and of opportunity." But every one of these rights is based not on Asian but on Western experience; every one is alien in spirit to traditional Indian thought and outlook. Democracy is a difficult form of government which has worked reasonably well only among a few western peoples.

There is no fool-proof perfect formula for government. There is no law which cannot be evaded if most people are determined not to observe it. No right can be upheld if most people are against it. Democracy has worked in Britain because the system was gradually evolved over the centuries in the course of the efforts of all classes of the British, from peers to ploughmen, to solve the day-to-day problems of living together. Their solutions were not perfect but they worked because they were in accord with the social conditions and relationships that existed from time to time. Rights were gradually formulated and given slowly widening application in changing circumstances through the centuries.

It would require a book to itself to detail the historical reasons which have enabled democracy to succeed. but, speaking generally, it has worked reasonably well where the people have inherited the traditions of Christianity, parti-

* The myth that the U.S.S.R. is an exception to this totalitarian rule has been exploded See, e.g. *Russia And Her Colonies* by Walter Kolarz.

cularly of Protestantism, where these traditions mingled fruitfully with the renaissance of Reason in the eighteenth century (I am thinking of Locke, Voltaire, and Rousseau), and better where a strong monarchy had produced that wider consciousness of community which made possible further extensions of equality among peers beyond the limits of religious sects and of social classes, and less well where (as in France) this did not fully happen.

These traditions and conceptions are alien to India.

The reader will perhaps have a more concrete picture of the thought in my mind if he imagines that India, having conquered and ruled Europe for a century, grants Europe independence; whereupon the Europeans, although disliking much of what they have seen of the Asian way of life, have yet learnt to value certain Asian institutions, and proceed to enshrine the customs of the Hindu joint family system into the new European constitution. I am not arguing for or against the Hindu joint family system when I point out that it is not perfect but works adequately in India because it has been evolved in response to Indian conditions; Hindus therefore understand it, accept it, and try to make it work. The difficulties that it would have to encounter if imposed from above in Europe would be ignorance of its theory and spirit, and misunderstanding of its objectives and rules and lack of the "know-how" to make it work.

But if the Hindu joint family system is so alien to European ideas, why, when the Indians concede independence to them, would the European nationalist leaders make it the law of their land? Because, in the circumstances imagined, the European intelligentsia would in the course of a century of Indian rule have become largely "Indianised". For four generations or more they would have studied Indian literature and law. The struggle of the European nationalists for independence would have been conducted against, and by means of, the institutions that foreign rule had imposed upon them. In using the foreign institutions to overthrow foreign rule, the Europeans would have familiarised themselves with their virtues, and when freedom came it would seem more practical to continue the existing system of government than to undermine stability by abolishing it. But this would not alter the fact that while the European nationalist leaders, civil servants, and upper middle classes generally, would understand and approve of this system, to the masses of the European countryside it would be alien; it would lack the

ease, familiarity, and affection of ancient European usage. It would command obedience or acquiescence rather than arouse loyalty and a passionate determination to uphold it at all costs.

That, I submit, is the broad picture in India today. For every passionate and understanding democrat like Jawaharlal Nehru, there are a hundred thousand Indians who accept passively the rights and duties of India's constitution, and a million who are unaware of their existence. India's problem is to make the rights enshrined in the Constitution living and exciting realities to India's millions. This is not impossible, but it will require a long and sustained effort.

If it be agreed that democracy, with its basic principle of respect for the individual as an end in himself (and not as a means to the aggrandizement of a privileged caste, a dictator, a party, or a state), is the faith which holds out the possibility of a great future for India, one must equally admit that whether the dream is realised or not depends almost entirely on the present generation of India's university and school teachers. There are many men and women of the highest character and devotion in this profession—indeed, the reader will be introduced to some of them in these pages—but, as a group, Indian teachers are disgruntled. Few are perhaps communists as yet, but most may be regarded as "agin' the government", that is they are in rebellion against India's heritage as it presents itself to them. This is not surprising when one reflects that teachers suffer as much as students from the overcrowding, lack of amenities, and poverty.

Teachers' salaries vary widely in different parts of India. The model scale of pay laid down by the West Bengal Government (Education Department Notification No. 5899 of 8-12-1951) gives the lowest grade of High School teacher a starting salary of Rs. 50/- rising to Rs. 80/- a month. Since this is a model scale intended to give a lead to all schools in the state, it seems best not to enquire how much lower is the scale of the average school which does not attempt the ideal. The University Education Commission says that the ordinary scale of a Grade II Lecturer at Annamalai University is Rs. 100-10-150, and a Professor Rs. 250-15-400-20-500. In Madras, the scales are better, while at the top comes Delhi, where a lecturer gets Rs. 250-25-500, and a Professor Rs. 800-50-1,250. The Delhi scales provide a living wage as standards go in India. The average is bet-

ween Annamalai and Delhi. The vast majority of teachers, whether of schools or of universities, are ill-paid and do not live much better than their pupils. In cities, like Calcutta, where living expenses are high, teachers and professors often take on a second job in their so-called spare time. I know of a Calcutta teacher who works in an office all day and teaches in night classes.

In such conditions is it any wonder that the same stuff from the same text-books is regurgitated year after year, heedless of the advance of knowledge? Who has the time or energy for wider reading? Is it any wonder that the teaching and student world is more sympathetic to communism than to democracy? At least no change in their circumstances could be for the worse, and the communists naturally inspire them with the hope that it would be for the better.

I draw attention to these facts in the hope that discussion will arouse public opinion to the danger that overshadows the future of freedom and democracy in India. I do not need to go over the ground which has been exhaustively investigated by the University Education Commission. If the Commission's financial and other recommendations were carried out, one could look with confidence to India's future.

One fact is, however, certain: Indian education cannot progress faster than India's material prosperity. The root of all the evils of indiscipline and low standards is the overall insufficiency of India's national income to afford adequate individual incomes in the pockets of students and teachers, and for the provision of ample buildings, amenities and medical care. Some people, in their natural indignation at what they see in Calcutta's student districts and elsewhere, urge that the government should immediately double or treble teachers' salaries and replace dilapidated buildings by whole blocks of new ones. They are crying for the moon. Education has to compete with defence, food, irrigation, abolition of landlordism, new railways and public works of all kinds, for the limited funds available for development. But what is possible, and what does not seem as though it were being done, is to give education its proper priority—the highest—in the Five-Year Plan of the federal government and in the development expenditure of the state governments.

ARRIVAL IN PILANI

THE MOMENT that I opened my eyes, and squinted at the passing countryside between the slats of the shutters, I knew that it could not be long before the train reached Loharu. Already the sun was up and shining with an early morning dazzle on the yellow sandhills, rippled on their surfaces like water, just beyond the concrete-posted wire fence that was running along the track under my eyes. I let down the wire mosquito net, and the wooden shutter followed it with the rickety crash that is routine on all Indian railways. When the equally routine clouds of dust had settled, we breathed the cool fresh air with gratitude. In succession, we passed a rocky hill that arose abruptly out of the plain with a little white *mandir** halfway up, some big spreading trees, a well, and distant thatches, all in the bland, shadowless, morning sunshine.

At last I saw a human figure: a woman wearing a wide indigo-blue skirt, bunched round the hem with its five and a half yards of fullness, its red edge swinging with a longer and slower rhythm than her hurried stride. Her bodice was rust-red, and the scarf which, starting from her high head-dress, was tucked half round her waist, was of mingled colours laid on in extraordinary blotches and spots: brown, petunia, turquoise, and green. She walked in haste, driving a white cow before her down a path towards the huddled roofs of a village. Her care-worn face, her athletic stride, and the beautiful white cow, created an impression of urgency and importance that detached them from the bare and impersonal landscape.

Then the train clattered over a culvert to reveal some half-naked children shading their eyes to watch us puff by, while their flock of goats nibbled at greenery sparse almost to invisibility. A hobbled baby camel gawked away on stiff legs as the engine gave a shrill hoarse toot.

On we rolled. . .past sand and rock; past fields in which lush green plants grew on damp ground irrigated from a well; past fields where brown and grey stems stood in rows swaying jerkily in the breeze—the unripened bajra† crop—

* Temple
† Millet—the characteristic grain crop of Rajasthan's hot savannah lands

not even worth gathering; obviously the monsoon had failed to reach this part of Shekhawati. A donkey or two and a sniffing pie-dog; figures stooping to glean; a shouting child walloping some indifferent buffaloes into motion; and every now and then the great stone well-heads standing up white or pinkish, with women or bullocks pulling up the goatskins at the end of immensely long ropes. How frighteningly deep some of those wells must be! To and from them walked the women, *chatties* or brass pots on their heads, fetching the household's water for the day. Two camels, one rusty, one grey, riders atop, trotted their big striding trot alongside the train in a dignified race with us for a few yards. The fine padded saddles and the glint of engraved metal, the huge red and orange *pagris,* the characteristic motion of the camels, powerful and awkward, forcing their riders into an eager forward stoop, suggested the banditry and clan feuds for which Rajasthan is old in story. They were in fact no more than a couple of local cultivators, but there is something about Rajputs on fast moving camels which clamours for a romantic interpretation.

We set out by jeep from Loharu station to drive to Pilani along fifteen miles of straight, sandy road. Camels trotted by, with one or two riders upon them; camels laden with vast bundles of bajra straw or sacks of grain; camels treading little circular mills behind thick circular hedges of thorns to grind the family corn; goats and bullocks and donkeys in charge of small herdboys and girls, staves in their hands, festooned with fluttering shirts, and trailing *pagris* tilted over their straining, glare-struck eyes; women and children trudging together, their indigo or red *gagaras** swinging rhythmically, their splendid carriage apparent despite (or is it because of?) the bundles on their heads; the bus from Loharu jam-packed with villagers and baggage and students; and every few miles a well (no life without one)—all shot past, as we plummeted along, skidding wherever sand drifts had invaded the road. Suddenly three children appeared a hundred yards ahead. The driver blew his horn. Two scuttled to the top of a wayside bank; the third, about six years old, stayed on. She was naked from the waist down, and her head was shaven. With feet apart, she took up a crouching, threatening attitude, right in our path, defying the hurtling jeep. The driver kept his thumb on the horn. She kept her place in the road. We skidded to a sickening stand-

* Skirts

still almost on top of her, so that I caught a yellow gleam from her eyes, saw the grin of her teeth. She burst into wild laughter and chatter; then, impudently, this small embodiment of the reckless Rajput spirit, having achieved her whim to stop us, joined her admiring companions on the bank.

We sighted the pure white clock tower, which dominates the colleges and hostels of Pilani, five miles before we reached it. Occasional great trees flourished in the neighbouring fields; one sheltered a charming little school-house, a temple and a well. Just before Pilani, we noticed at regular intervals along the road piles of thorns, signs that ancient Rajputana had, after all, connexions with the incongruous modern world of ration cards and slogans, for each pile protected a young tree presented by a patriotic local business magnate in response to the national "Grow More Trees" campaign.

A temple and huge well, both new and clean and of characteristic Hindu architecture, marked the beginning of the village. Long walls to the left partially hid white buildings in a nicely cultivated compound which I learned were the hospital and the doctor's quarters. A paved road led to the hospital. Another led off past the Rajasthan Hostel, the oldest in Pilani, and continued on past Chandra Bhawan, G. D. Birla's country seat, to the private airfield.

On our left, we passed the High School boys' hostel behind its walls and railing. This hostel, unlike the bare white buildings that we saw a few minutes later, looked long-established, cosy and lived-in, under the shade of fine trees and surrounded by gardens. Clean white walls hid the residences on our right. And now the narrow sandy road emerged into a wide open space, skirted by trees and greenery, where many people were walking, talking or working. For the moment the college buildings were invisible. We were in the *Place de la Concorde* of the old village. The big tank* in the centre, fed by several springs, was surrounded and partitioned by an ornate system of white walls and stone "umbrellas"† obviously designed by an architect. Under shady trees, buffaloes drank from troughs and vendors squatted by the road. Residential houses peered over

* To Western readers this will suggest some kind of object in iron, but in India the tank is the village pond Some are very large.

† See illustration number 55 for this characteristic Indian sight Whereas the summerhouse in a Western park or garden is usually built facing south to collect the sun's rays, in India these summerhouses are intended as shelters from the sweltering heat, and are usually built near water, in a pool, or coolly flowing, or spraying from a fountain

high walls from the village side. A *mandir* on a neighbouring slope added to the ornamental effect of the whole. One section of the tank is walled off for the *dhobis* who work at cemented *ghats*, specially piped with fresh water, washing the garments of 3,000 students. Cattle quench their thirst and soak themselves in a second section. A third is for bathing. And there are deep wells of cool drinking water.

What looked like a forest of medium-sized trees, their limbs trimmed into curious club-shaped forms, lay in front of us, with paths fingering away here and there. Leaving the *Place de la Concorde* behind, we entered a narrow metalled road through the forest, and a quarter of a mile later reached a gate in a wall beside which stood a *chowkidar* armed with a carbine and bandolier. We had reached our goal—the educational colony of New Pilani. Behind us, ancient India lay higgledy-piggledy as it has grown up through the centuries. Before us, all was new, planned and orderly. It was the difference between the Saddar bazaar of Old Delhi and the central vista of New Delhi, between the unorganised picturesqueness of old Baltimore and any streamlined Greenbelt town built by the United States Resettlement Administration. Here were broad sweeps of metalled roads leading from the main block of the Science, Arts, Commerce, and Engineering colleges, around the great campus, 800 yards long by 400 wide, past the Girls' High School, past hostels, neat bungalows, a cinema house, a post office and playing fields in which some were practising athletics, others playing football. We drove along to the end of the east side of the campus—past a tree-girt garden full of flowers in the midst of which stands the white bungalow of Lt.-Commander Pande, executive head of the Birla Education Trust—until we stopped by a small canal in a stone bed.

Several men unloaded our baggage, while we walked towards a great statue of Shiva in meditation, from the crown of whose head spouts a flaunting plume of water representing the birth of the Ganges. Beyond Shiva, we saw on a higher plane Canal Koti, the guest-house, in the centre of an island created by a wide canal dug round it like a moat. Ornamental "umbrellas", bathing steps down to the canal and flowering gardens lay before us. We were to live in this lovely spot for four months.

As the seats and benches proclaimed, the gardens of Canal Koti were open to the students and to the public, but

there was no intrusion from the students, many of whom would sit there in the evenings, gossiping, while some swam in the canal or others, singing and joking, sculled round in skiffs.

The country people, however, treated us frankly as a zoo. Indeed, several groups from afar thought it worth while to hire a lorry to come to view us. A dozen women and children once walked into our sitting room at 9-30 p.m. We used to guess that we were about to go on view when we heard an approaching chatter outside, followed by silence, then a scuffling of naked or slippered feet on the verandah, and a bulging of the door curtains. It was etiquette for the men to remain out of sight as a mark of respect to us but half a dozen eager women's faces would protrude between the curtains and as many children be propelled into the middle of the floor, all eyes fixed upon us. Such Hindi as I possessed gradually took on a local accent, and we always managed to part with mutual gratification after a two-way inspection. For me, their highly coloured dresses and silver ornaments, the liveliness of their dark peasant faces full of shrewd observation and their mouths full of loud wit, were endlessly interesting; while for their attention, our short skirts and exposed legs competed with my blue eyes. Slowly they gazed their fill at all three of us in turn. For many, we were the first Europeans that they had ever seen. Our children especially interested them. The women asked Aminta (aged 10) if she were married, and her general "not-on-your-life" attitude amused some and scandalised others. They wanted to know how many children I had and nodded approvingly when I spoke of an elder son at school, but my family total of three was pitifully inadequate in their eyes.

Then there was Mala, our staid and dutiful *chowkidar;* Dåulat, the cook, who lived, smŏked to a kipper, in the kitchen, and did his commendable best to provide the European food to which our stomachs were accustomed and which, therefore, in order to preserve our digestion, we were obliged to alternate with the rich Indian dishes that we preferred. There were two *malis* (gardeners). There were the kind friends and shy students who visited us ; Bardu, the beautiful blue bird who adopted us ; and the exquisite peacocks who prinked daily beneath the branches or bundled noisily into the tree-tops to roost at dusk. And, of course, Pratap Singh, our Nepalese bearer, whom we had brought with us, always resourceful, unbaffled and unruffled by the

unexpected, always polite, and using his *kukri** (with which, he has given the children to understand, he has killed more than one man) to chop our meat.

The children used to help the *mali chokras*† to carry earth in baskets on their heads, and occasionally disorganised the work by insisting on wild games of catch-as-catch-can. It was a sight to see a couple of *malis* in trailing garments clearing a hedge at speed, their legs tucked up under them like witches on broom-sticks, while the *ayah*, Sujnoo, sank full length on the ground with laughter.

From time to time, Mala would try to cooperate with the head gardener in enforcing discipline, but mostly he would grinningly join in the game until his sense of guilt got the better of him; then he would invent a sore heel, or a corn on his foot, while the children pulled at his hand and shouted: "Come on, Mala! Come on!" Mala would give in and play again. But soon it would be what looked like a cracked hip that forced him to rest, or he might produce a hacking cough, and abandon the game with sheepish grins and many a glance over his shoulder. Once after an evening party, we all came running home, and I joined the children in a last-minute sprint, because I could still beat them if I got off to a stolen start. Mala looked at me in amazement and then led us up the path like a deer. But he felt that this sort of thing was simply "not done", and so, as we puffed up the steps, he stopped short and stood saluting us on the verandah with a distracted expression on his face. Poor Mala, his nun's conscience always spoilt his fun.

The *mali chokras* used to torment that slave driver, the head *mali*, when from time to time life went a bit too slowly for them. Hundreds of a minute kind of brown bee with a bad sting lived in a nest clustered on a tree. According to my children, a *mali chokra* called Mailal used to be able to make the bees sting the head *mali* at will. Could he have found a queen and planted it on the *mali's* shirt? It was this head *mali* who unfailingly appeared, buzzing and brown like one of his bees, to interrupt the children's games and chase his *chokras* back to work.

Black and white cobras inhabit this countryside. Two wandering snake-charmers visited us one day with baskets stuffed with fully grown and jungly specimens. The snake men looked jungly enough themselves, their hair unkempt,

* A large curved Gurkha dagger.
† Small boys acting as gardeners' aids.

their clothes ragged and of the prevailing sandy colour; the pendulous bundles on either side of their staves, large and heavy. The music from their bulbous wooden flutes was no reedy melody. It started up in loud unison, a vigorous male bleating with marked rhythm and clean tune, like a reel, which increased in speed and complication for as much as twenty minutes. While they played, they undid their bundles in turn and raised the lids of their baskets to the sound of angry hisses from within. Several snakes set off at a smart pace in different directions, but long arms fished them back with delicate deliberate movements, and two were clamped beneath a charmer's feet, where they remained, struggling slightly. The swaying movement of the charmer's arms, as well as the music, helped to hypnotize the cobras; they soon became quiescent or dazed, all but one which preferred to gaze outwards at us, fixing me with an eye like a baleful ruby. The music went from eightsome to strathspey and then waltzed madly for a few moments; one of the cobras slumped drunkenly over the edge of the basket. The lids came slowly towards the Medusa-like clusters of vicious hooded heads, and furious hisses rose to growls as they were packed up. In replacing the cloth, the younger snake-charmer, instead of picking it up in a pinch from above, let a finger show beneath and was immediately bitten on the tip. Both men remained quietly on their heels. The elder searched through several bundles and little boxes, while the younger tightly gripped his wrist as the blood dripped from the two holes in his finger-tip. At last the object of the search was found. It looked like a square black bean but was a snake's dried poison sac. Applied to the wounds, it began to absorb the poison and, at length, stuck fast. The bitten man released his wrist and moved his arm to and fro, with a melancholy expression on his face, which seemed a modest enough protest against a situation in which I, for one, would have been terrified. From the beginning to the end of their performance, neither man budged. When they had gone, I examined the four separate impressions in the gravel made by their feet.

CHAPTER IV

THE PILANI PATHSHALA—EARLY DAYS

WHEN G. D. Birla was born in 1894, Pilani was not the great educational centre that it is today; it was a village, tiny, remote, and obscure. There was not even a school, but Seth Shivnarayan Birla took interest in the future of his two grandsons, Rameshwardas and Gyanshyamdas, and when they were respectively eight and six years old, he insisted that a teacher should be obtained for them. Accordingly, one Kanjee Thakur, of Bagar, was employed on a salary of Rs. 5 a month.*

It was natural that neighbours should want to take advantage of a teacher's presence to have some instruction drilled into their children also, and so in 1900 the Birla *pathshala* was formed and Kanjee Thakur acquired thirty pupils. This little *pathshala* was the ancestor of the Birla High School and of the Education Trust. The original building still exists and is used as a primary school for the village children to this day. Lora and I watched a class there in January, 1952.

G. D. Birla has given the following account of his memories of his first and only school:—

> Of the three pedagogic R's, Kanjee knew but one He could not read or write correctly. It was never thought necessary in those days for a teacher or a student in a village school to be proficient in reading and writing; the main achievement sought was proficiency in arithmetic. Kanjee was reputed to know *Leelavatee* (a Hindu treatise on calculation) by heart. A correct estimate of his knowledge none could make, as none in the village had the capacity to do so. But if the depth of Kanjee's knowledge remained unfathomed, it must be said to his credit that he was not bad in elementary arithmetic. We boys thus began our training in *putti pahara* addition, division, subtraction, multiplication, and mental arithmetic, which completed and exhausted Kanjee's curriculum.
>
> Meanwhile, friends of Seth Shivnarayanji in Bombay were pressing him to have us taught English also. These well-meaning people would often say: "Sethjee, give good English education to your grandsons." To which he would reply: "Oh, what's the use! They would become *Kistans* (Christians)." Finally, however, he agreed that some knowledge of English would be necessary in our business life. At least we should be able to read and write telegrams.
>
> Now, there actually was a gentleman in the village who claimed—and his claim was accepted without dispute by the whole village—that he could read telegrams, though he confessed that he could not write

* This was more than it looks, because it bought six times more than it would in 1952.

one. For years, his claim remained untested. Who in Pilani could be so unlucky as to receive a telegram? Telegrams in a village meant only one thing: bad news. The recipient would not touch food until it had been translated by the telegraph master, whose station was ten miles away from Pilani. But, one day, at long last, a telegram did arrive. The recipient hastened to our local reader of telegrams. But the learned man shook his head and said: "Ah, friend, it is unfortunate that your telegram happens to come from Calcutta I have completed my course only up to Delhi. That is 120 miles from here: for any distance beyond that, you must ask someone else."

Seth Shivnarayanji was mortified to think that nobody in his village could read and write telegrams. His grandsons, he felt, must be accomplished in this art, so, at the end of the year, the *pathshala* was converted into an English school. Master Rambilas was the first teacher of English. On his arrival, Thakur Kanjee left with a heavy heart. R D. and I liked him and shed affectionate tears on his departure.

Master Rambilas could, so it was said, actually talk English. But we knew at once that he knew no Hindi. The First Book of Reading was taught to us through Urdu and only the fortunate few could make anything of it.

Rap it in, tap it in,
What are the teachers paid for?
Clap it in, slap it in,
What are the children made for?

And the cramming continued.

Then there appeared on the scene Master Shri Ram, a relative of Master Rambilas. Master Shri Ram was young, fresh from the High School, and full of enthusiasm. He was ambitious, but between his ambition and his method there was keen rivalry of a peculiar sort. If his ambition was unbounded, his method, too, could never be kept within the limits of the practical. No course had been prescribed by the State and so Master Shri Ram was free to make his own experiments. In the teeth of opposition from the villagers, he introduced the teaching of Hindi. The sun now set and rose in Hindi. This meant another hardship for us boys who would have preferred Marwari every time. But the matter did not end there. Within the year as many new subjects as there are greens in a grocer's shop were taught to us: Blackie's *Self-Culture* for a child who had just mastered the alphabet; *manusmriti* for some, *sheeghrabodh* for others. Nor were *laghu kaumudi, amarkosh satyartha prakash* overlooked. Even *aryoddeshya ratnamala,* setting forth the aims and objects of the *Arya Samaj,* was included

Ram it in, jam it in,
Children's heads are hollow.
Slam it in, cram it in,
Still there's more to follow.

This Romantic Age continued for a fairly long period until, one day, there was a stir in the village. An Inspector of Schools from Jaipur had turned up. This was a novel experience for Pilani. We knew the police patrol, the *thanedar* and even the *nazim,* but we had never heard of an Inspector of Schools. But he had arrived and had to be faced. And he was faced. Master Shri Ram succeeded in showing off to advantage his collection of books and the cramming which stood to his

credit. And if the Inspector was not impressed with his methods, he was at least heartened by his enthusiasm. He imposed a curriculum on the school.

By 1905, when my brother was thirteen and I was eleven, we had both learnt to read and write telegrams, and thus our education was complete. But the school continued after our departure.

The departure of the Birla boys coincided with a new chapter in the history of the school. Following the Inspector's recommendations, a prescribed curriculum was adopted, and the *pathshala* was recognised by Jaipur State as a lower primary school. The pupils had to walk some twenty-five miles to Jhunjhunu to sit for their periodical examinations. It was not until 1916 that its status was raised to that of an upper primary school.

In 1921, a new building was completed and the upper primary school left the original one-roomed house which eventually reverted to use as a lower primary. In 1922, the upper primary became a middle school; elementary physical training was introduced; united prayers were inaugurated; attention was paid to cleanliness on the part of the students; scholarships were liberally given to the deserving. All this made the institution popular, and it began to attract students from the surrounding areas. In 1925, the middle school was raised to a High School.

Thereafter progress was still more rapid. By 1926, the number of students seeking admission from all over Rajputana justified the erection of a boarding house with accommodation for one hundred boys. A new block of buildings was added in 1928. As the expenditure increased, G. D. Birla decided that what was needed was a regularly constituted endowment which would allow for planned growth. So, on January 23, 1929, the Birla Education Trust was created, with school buildings, hostels, and staff quarters valued at Rs. 2,50,000 (£18,750) and an income from securities valued at Rs. 7,00,000 (£52,500)*. In July, 1929, the High School became an Intermediate College. It then had 275 boys.

Hitherto, the staff had been recruited in part from local, in part from imported, talent. The local man was apt to be limited in outlook and accomplishments, and the better types among the imported teachers were difficult to keep. To a man of parts, the village of Pilani seemed a stepping stone to nothing but the adjoining Thar desert. To reach the nearest

* To secure comparison with 1952 purchasing power, these figures should be multiplied between three and four times.



7. G. D. Bırla, Chairman of the Bırla Education Trust



8 Lt. Commander S. D Pande, Secretary of the Bırla Educatıon Trust



9. Rajput guard who fought and killed dacoits. See page 202



10. Mali's boy with whom Armyn and Aminta used to play at the Canal Kothi guest house See page 46



11. Pılani's postman



12 Durwan from the Shılp-shala

railway station, you had to cross forty-five miles of roadless sand-dune country. The normal conveyance was a camel's back, an alarming prospect to anyone used to the amenities of city life in far-off Allahabad or Banaras, the nearest university centres. Once they realised that they were being asked to maroon themselves in an inaccessible desert, few would look at the job, and of those who came few stayed long.

None had the imagination to grasp what a unique, incredible, fairy-tale opportunity they were letting slip. For G. D. Birla had developed ambitions for the work that he had initiated. He was an industrialist, not an educationist, so he could not realise his ideas himself, but he was ready to provide the millions that would enable an educationist of vision and calibre, prepared to lead a dedicated life, to make not one experiment along, say, Montessori lines, but as many as he had heard of or could think up; to build not one school but a whole university town; to create, out of this remote desert village, a centre to which international educationists would come on pilgrimage, which the Presidents and Prime Ministers of an independent India (itself still a dream) would visit with pride in a great national achievement. Looking back, one can see what an amazing proposition G. D. Birla had to offer a young man in 1929, but it was natural that, at the time, the average educationist should view the headmastership of the Birla Intermediate College with the same disfavour that most people would view a headmastership in the furthest Sahara. He was being asked to give up everything that made life worth living—relations, friends, comfort, civilisation—for what? G. D. Birla was looking for a man who could give reality to the answer that he had in his mind.

CHAPTER V

THE BIRLA COLLEGE

IT WAS NATURAL that in his search for a new principal for the Birla Intermediate College, G. D. Birla should turn to his friend Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Vice-Chancellor and founder of Banaras Hindu University, but, this personal reason apart, he could also hope to obtain from among the Vice-Chancellor's staff a principal imbued with the atmosphere and outlook that distinguished the Hindu University from all others at that time, and even today.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, and increasingly in the first decade of the twentieth, many Indians began to feel that the "westernisation" of Indian education had gone too far. Pandit Malaviya was outstanding among those who worked to revive interest in Hindu literature and learning, and the foundation of the Hindu University after years of propaganda was the crowning achievement of his life.

Starting off with a donation of Rs. 101/- from his father, Pandit Malaviya went on to collect in the course of the years no less than sixteen million rupees as an endowment for the child of his brain. While the University's foremost object was to "promote the study of the *shastras* as a means of preserving and popularising... the best thought and culture of the Hindus and all that is good and great in the ancient civilisation of India," the University in no way turned its back on Western knowledge, for its further objects were "to advance learning and original research both in Arts and Science in all their branches...to promote the growth of such scientific, technical, and professional knowledge, combined with practical training, as is best calculated to foster the development of indigenous industries and the material resources of the country," and "to build up the character of the nation's youth on sound and healthy lines by making religion and ethics an integral part of education... to create a synthesis of the East and the West; to assimilate the scientific knowledge and methods of Europe with the ancient wisdom and culture of the Hindus; to create, in fact a new and inclusive civilisation, which, while preserving the best in the Hindu tradition, welcomes the new knowledge which gives to Europe its material strength."*

* Quotations from the Silver Jubilee brochure, published in 1941, by the University's Old Students' Association.

The man whom Pandit Malaviya recommended to G. D. Birla was Shukdev Pande, Assistant Professor of Mathematics.

S. D. Pande's grandfather had been a physician to the Maharaja of Kashmir. His father, also a physician, practised in Dehra Dun, where Pande was born in 1895. He was brought up as a member of a joint Hindu family. The atmosphere was orthodox without being pedantic; disciplined and austere, but happy. His grandfather wanted him to learn Sanskrit and to become a pandit in the traditional way, but young Shukdev was interested in science, and he was allowed to go to an English school at Dehra Dun where he distinguished himself in mathematics. In 1908, he went to the Government High School at Almora, passing out in 1910 to join the Muir Central College, Allahabad, where he obtained his M.Sc. He was a student of Professor R. H. Moody and of Rai Bahadur Umesh Chandra Ghosh. In addition to his academic studies at Allahabad, he distinguished himself at games and played his part in the life of the University. He was captain of the Oxford and Cambridge Hostel's* hockey and tennis, and he represented the Hostel in Lahore, Bombay, Poona, Calcutta, Puri and elsewhere. He was editor of *Punch,* the Hostel magazine, and secretary for social service work.

As a child, S. D. Pande had lived through, and been deeply influenced by, the *swadeshi* campaign that agitated northern India after the partition of Bengal in 1905; when only twelve years old, he had gone from door to door selling Indian-made cloth for the cause. When, therefore, he found that Hindu festivals were ignored and only Christian holidays observed by the University Hostel's European staff, he fought stubbornly and successfully to overcome this prejudice.

That S. D. Pande did not marry until 1916, when he was already 23, suggests the progressive attitude of his orthodox family.

His family wanted him to try for the Provincial Civil Service, but he did not wish to take service under the British. Instead, he joined Banaras Hindu University in 1918 as Assistant Professor of Mathematics. There is nothing loud or ostentatious about S. D. Pande. He never thrust himself forward at Banaras, but Pandit Malaviya soon discovered that a natural leader had joined his staff. Pande never sought the limelight, but he could not avoid it, for while other people talked about what should be done, he went ahead and did it,

* Now Holland Hall.

without fuss. He was the obvious person to be secretary of the University Athletic Association, not merely because he was himself an athlete, but because he was ready to do the work. In the same way, he became a company commander in the University Training Corps.

Malaviya was a pioneer in what is now known as "rural uplift" and he encouraged his students to devote their leisure to social work in the villages. He hoped to train men who would go out from the University, dedicated to the betterment of the countryside. S. D. Pande was among his most devoted assistants in this work, and one of the few who continued to put Malaviya's ideals into practice when eventually he left Banaras.

His teaching, his research, his tennis playing, the Athletic Association, the U.T.C., and his social work, did not exhaust Pande's energy and willingness. He urged on Pandit Malaviya that games should be made compulsory. The Pandit pointed out that this was, in the first place, a question of money. Pande said at once that he was ready to help to raise it. Pandit Malaviya's reply was to appoint him honorary secretary of the University Collection Committee. His first task was to raise funds for a gymnasium, and the present Shivaji Gymnasium is the permanent result of his energy.

S. D. Pande was 36, and G. D. Birla 35, when they met on Janmastami day, 1929, in Pandit Malaviya's drawing room. Pande had no idea why Malaviya had sent for him. He thought it must be something to do with his collecting work, but the Vice-Chancellor said:

"Birlaji would like to have you as principal of his college at Pilani."

Pande was astounded.

"You have thrown me out of my moorings," he said. "I've always assumed that I'd found my life's work with you here . . . And I don't think that I'd care to work in a private institution."

"But," interposed G. D. Birla, "supposing you were allowed to make what you like of your own institution?"

In origin and in appearance, these two young men—the slim, hawk-like, merchant prince from the Rajput desert plains, and the stocky, bull-doggish, Brahman scholar from the U. P. hills—were dissimilar. But by temperament, they had much in common. Both are men of exceptional equanimity and determination. Although both are pleasant and

easy conversationalists, they are also ready listeners. Both are staunch, undeviating, but unembittered nationalists.

Pandit Malaviya urged Pande to accept G. D. Birla's offer. It was, he pointed out, a wonderful opportunity to develop and spread further afield the ideas of rural regeneration that he had learnt at Banaras and to make a creative contribution towards the re-orientation of higher education in India.

The upshot was that Pande said to Pandit Malaviya: "You are my guru. I must go wherever you bid me."

So, in due course, Mr. and Mrs. Pande, and their four little boys with piles of baggage and bedding rolls, were dumped on the platform at the wayside station of Jhunjhunu, which was then the terminus of the Jaipur State Railway. They were alone in a strange land, and still 30 miles from their destination. A man said he knew of another man in a nearby village who had newly got a car which he sometimes hired out. Pande asked him to go and tell the car owner that a client waited at the station. Morning became afternoon, evening night; the messenger did not return and the car did not appear. Eventually someone admitted that he had seen the car go off in the opposite direction. By then, it was too late to start out and the Pandes spent the night in the station waiting room. Early next morning they hired a bullock-cart; small and narrow, it bumped along devoid of springs and comfort. The sun grew intolerable. Sometimes the Pandes lay jolting on their bedding rolls and baggage; sometimes they walked. Time and the miles crawled past. Under the vertical midday sun, they rested by a well in the shade of a tree. For food, they ate the *purees* that they had bought at Jhunjhunu station. Then they went on.

Towards dusk, Pande said to the bullock driver: "Do you know of a place where we can spend the night?"

"Yes, a little further on."

At the end of half an hour, Pande said: "We are tired and hungry. How much further?"

"Oh! Just a little!"

"Yes, but how much?"

"Oh! Not far."

And at intervals, the bullock driver replied without fail: "Oh! Just a little way. We're as good as there."

Some hours later, the shaggy outline of a dwelling loomed in the moonlight. It turned out to be a *caravan sarai.*

"Here we may sleep," said the bullock driver.

"What about some milk and some food?"

"I'll go and see."

Mrs. Pande refused to take the children into the *caravan sarai* for fear of the snakes which frequently inhabit old and dilapidated buildings. The two smaller boys were asleep and the two elder complaining of hunger when the man re-appeared with an earthenware *chatty* of milk.

"Everyone was asleep. No one wants to get up and make *chapattis*. But I got this."

They poured it out into cups—cool and delicious from the big *chatty*. One of the boys took a big gulp, choked, and spat it out of his mouth. Cautiously, the others all took a sip; violently, they all spat. The milk tasted like fire. They became aware of a bitter smell and when Mrs. Pande put her hand in the *chatty* she found several handfuls of chillies in the bottom where they had been soaking. The younger boys now woke up and, on the verge of tears, begged for milk. There was a long silence. Then suddenly Pande laughed. He remembered that half a dozen *pedhas* were left in the family tiffin carrier; he picked it up and departed saying that he would find some milk. He felt his way to the well in the dark, filled a bowl with water and crushed the *pedhas* into it. Then he returned and said:

"I've found some milk. This village has a specially sweet kind. It's good. Try it."

He poured it into the children's mugs, and they drank it down gratefully. Exhausted by their long slow train journey from their home in Kasauli to Delhi and thence on to Rewari and Jhunjhunu, by their day and night in the station waiting room, and by some fourteen hours of heat, dust, and bumping in the creaking springless cart, they fell asleep on their bedding rolls, under the stars.

On the evening of the third day after their arrival at Jhunjhunu, the Pandes reached Pilani.

In the course of the next twenty-four hours Pande made the acquaintance of his staff, who, all smiles and politeness, were curious to get a first glimpse of the new Principal. Gossips were not lacking among them.

"You know, of course, that in the past two years, five Principals have come and gone?"

"The only teachers who stay on are local people. No outsider can stick it."

"Do you know how long the last Principal lasted? Four months! If you hang on for six, you'll be doing well!"

But they did not know the man with whom they now had to deal.

Pande is a Brahman of hill ancestry and his views on life and on discipline are at once simpler and sterner than those of many other Hindus. Like most hillmen in all countries, he is a fighter at heart. His stocky frame stands foursquare to the world, physically and metaphorically. He is frank. He dislikes hints and insinuations; he likes directness. There is an air both of modesty and of authority about him. He not only looks the most reliable, the most dependable creature you ever saw, he is. His voice is quiet, but his laugh is loud and gay, and comes from the whole of him.

Alongside the Intermediate College was a great well, worked by bullocks which lumbered down a 125 foot ramp to pull a goatskin water-container to the top of the 125 foot well. Water for the boys' use was stored in a sizable tank. At 10 p.m. one night after Pande's arrival a routine occurrence befell the College: the tank was found to be empty. Someone had left the tap on. The 275 boys, the staff and their families—some 350 souls—were without water. Nobody could wash. Nobody could drink. The well bullock-man had long since retired to rest—nobody knew where. A disconsolate group of masters and boys were recriminating and complaining around the tap. One master was ordering the boys to go and fetch the bullocks; rebellious, the boys were saying that it was not their job to act as bullock drivers and well-men.

Pande appeared.

"What, no water? No bullock-man? Who'll help me to get the beasts? Somebody show me where they're kept."

For the first time, a self-reliant body was taking charge. For the first time, Pilani was experiencing the combination of Pande's cheerfulness and his winning assumption that, *of course, everyone* wanted to help. He strode off to the bullocks' stable with a group of boys tagging after. In half an hour there was enough water for everyone to have a drink and a sort of a wash. Pande and his boys—yes, they were "his" boys now—worked long into the night, filling the tank, so that there should be a full water supply for the next morning; the day would start normally, and not with everything in a muddle, and everybody late and in a bad temper.

Pande remained Principal of the Birla College for the next seventeen years and in order to assess his achievements, it is necessary to ask what the Trust's objectives were in 1929, and

how, and to what extent, he carried them out.

G. D. Birla wanted to promote both primary and higher education not merely in his home village, but throughout the province of Shekhawati.

Shekhawati was, and is, the home of some of the wealthiest merchants and industrialists in India, but although the Mahajans and Sahukars of the Vaishya caste were mostly proficient in reading, writing, and arithmetic, few went on to higher education. The older generation were content to remain traders, but new industries were now springing up and their progress was hampered for lack of personnel with the necessary higher education, technical and general.

G. D. Birla wanted to provide a first class modern education which should be available within the province, so that young boys need not face the perils* of being sent for their schooling to distant centres many hundreds of miles away from their homes. He wanted that education to be as cheap as possible. He wanted it to combine Western learning with respect for Hindu ideals. He was interested in character building; he wanted to turn out good citizens rather than passers of examinations. His aim was similar to that of another merchant philanthropist, Sir Thomas Sutton, who in 1611 left his fortune for the foundation of Charterhouse School "for" (in the pleasant Elizabethan phrase) "the promotion of piety and good literature." G. D. Birla hoped to get the Intermediate College on to a sound footing and to have it recognised as fit to be raised to degree status so that Shekhawati should be self-sufficient in education as soon as possible.

G. D. Birla was also conscious that one of the gaps in Indian education as a whole was its concentration on higher education and its neglect of the countryside. The Census Report showed that the percentage of literates (defined for census purposes as those able to sign their names) was 6.8 in Jaipur state, as compared with 9.5 for India. But G. D. Birla had no desire to turn peasants into *babus*.

While he considered that the peasant would be at a less disadvantage in life if he were able to read, write, and calculate, he did not want him to become an unemployed city clerk, looking down on his "uneducated" brothers and sisters. In common with Pandit Malaviya and others who had given thought to the problem, he believed that the solution lay in combining the three R's with handicrafts which would

* See chapter III.

improve the productive capacity of the cultivator and the artisan, and thus enable them the better to fit into their native surroundings. G. D. Birla therefore envisaged primary schools that would provide education with a rural bias.

Thus, Pande started his career at Pilani with two immediate targets: to get the College organised up to degree standards, and to launch rural schools; and with one over-all objective: to think of education in terms of citizenship rather than of book learning.

From the beginning of history, the more intelligent among teachers have realised that an ounce of practice is worth a pound of precept. The child's character is formed by the way in which he sees his parents and teachers behave rather than by the frequently different way in which they tell him that he ought to behave. Cheerfulness and truth-telling are not learnt from sermons but from example. With such reflections in mind, it becomes clearer than ever why Pandit Malaviya recommended Pande to G. D. Birla. When others were still talking about what should be done, Pande was doing it. He was no shirker. On the contrary, he was always on the look out for ways to increase his contribution to the life of the community in which he found himself. But, besides being a good citizen, he was a teacher, and he had therefore reflected over the problems of his profession. He was critical of the curriculum laid down for the schools recognised by the Boards of Education in India. He thought that it relied too much on books and too little on creating opportunities for learning by doing. It was divorced from life. It was not meant for the mass of average boys but to prepare for the university the exceptional student whom it crammed with ill-digested information intended essentially to enable him to answer examination questions. It ignored mental attitudes and habits, and spiritual values. The curriculum did not cater for different aptitudes; there were no specialised courses for the fine arts, or for girls. It led to professions, such as government service and the law, which were over-crowded. It did not prepare students for work either on the land or in industry because it encouraged the false ideal that the hall-mark of a man of culture was that he did not work with his hands. And, finally, there was insufficient interest in physical training, sports, and games.

Pande recognised that to draw up a curriculum which would satisfy him but which would be refused recognition by the Board of Education would entail disadvantages too great to

be ignored. But, if he had to make shift with what was laid down for him inside school hours, he could do what he liked outside. Hence, the emphasis at Pilani on extra-curricular activities designed to counter-balance the deficiencies of the classroom.

Whenever Pande wanted to inaugurate a new activity, he used to say: "Who'll help me to—?"

And it soon became clear that no one could hang back and get away with it. Those who wished to escape could only do so by leaving Pilani. A few did. Pande did not try to stop them.

Those who remained suddenly found themselves being turned into pioneers. It was an exhilarating experience. A set of masters and a set of boys who had hitherto been leading separate lives were converted by Pande into a community. Before long, boys and masters worked together, played together, and found it natural to spend their leisure together, and the warm personal relationships thus established have remained the most memorable of the assets with which Pilani endowed the boys of that period. Pande gave life and direction to the Trust's uncertain organisation. A variety of activities had previously been tried and failed, or merely wilted, for lack of unifying purpose. But now, games and sports, scouting and dramatics, clubs of all kinds and debates on all subjects, were inaugurated, and all came under the spur of Pande's enthusiasm.

In his own so-called leisure, Pande set about organising village schools in the neighbourhood, and one of the shrewdest and most admirable things that he did was to invite volunteer helpers from his College staff and from the boys. Groups from Pilani went out to start Lantern Schools and sand-writing in nearby villages. Their job was not merely to teach the three R's but to undertake all the activities of education in elementary hygiene, health, etc. that come under the general heading of rural uplift. Thus, the staff and the boys had the privilege, the fun, and the wonderful educative experience, of sharing in a constructive effort that within fifteen years covered no fewer than 395 village schools with over 15,000 pupils.*

One of the first new schemes that Pande began in the College was to divide the boys up into groups of twenty, each under the leadership of a teacher. On first joining, a new boy was assigned to a group, and remained in it throughout his years at school. The teacher acted as guide, philosopher

* See chapter on Rural Schools.

and friend, getting to know his boys and their ways, interests, and problems. There was not only the personal relationship between the teacher and the individual, but between the individuals inside the group, who enjoyed many activities in common, including, for example, picnics, scouting and rural school work. In addition, any problem affecting the group as a whole, or one of its members, could be brought forward for debate and common decision.

In such a scheme, a great deal depends on the personality of the teacher handling the group. The idea has points in common with the system of "moral tutors" that was peculiar to New College, Oxford, in my time. At New College, besides being assigned to various tutors for his studies, each undergraduate was also assigned to a moral tutor, who was supposed to look after and "father" him generally. I have known of perfect friendships thus begun which lasted long after the student had left the College and went out into the world. But the system broke down when the tutor was indolent, or if it chanced that he and a particular student disliked each other. In such cases, a solution is not easy. In theory, a student might have been entitled to ask for a change of moral tutor. In fact, he would probably have shrunk from the possible unpleasantness involved in explaining his differences with his tutor to the Warden. In practice, the harm that resulted from being assigned to a moral tutor whom one did not like was not positive but negative—one missed the opportunity of a pleasant and helpful friendship that others enjoyed.

At Pilani, however, as long as Pande was Principal of the College, the system seems to have worked with outstanding success. I have read and heard testimonies to it from old boys, one of whom, for example, spoke of it thus:

"Life was rigorous at Pilani in those days, but it was fun. There was comradeship between boys and masters. We did everything together. Physical drill in the morning was compulsory for the boys, but our group teachers joined in too. And they took part in all that went on in the playing fields. If pot-bellies, and grey-beards, and elderly gents in general, could mix in with our games like over-grown schoolboys, how could we youngsters skulk and hide in the hostels? Then, again, our professors used to trot about in the blazing sun, looking in on the hostels in their spare time to help students out with their preparation for exams. With us, that was a common occurrence, and it was not until we left Pilani and compared notes with fellows from other colleges that we realised that

our experience was unique. At Pilani, we all lived mixed up together, not only in games, but at shows like debates, and dramatics, and concerts. And the masters used to invite us to their homes to play indoor games, cards, carrom, and the like, and to eat enormous teas. We invited the teachers to tea ourselves, too, and I am not saying that we didn't do so with an eye on the return invitation and those gorgeous dishes that you couldn't get in any restaurant!"

But if, for masters and boys, it was a happy and inspiring period, for Pande, amidst much satisfaction, there were also tiresomenesses, difficulties, and one grievous setback.

Pande was soon in the bad books of both the educational and the police authorities of Jaipur State! To understand why, one needs to recall the political atmosphere of the time.

From the suppression of the Mutiny of 1857 onwards, the second half of the nineteenth century saw unquestioned acceptance of British rule at its zenith, whereas each advancing year of the twentieth century saw increasing criticisms and agitation by the politically minded classes. There were many reasons for this, ranging from the impression created throughout Asia by the Japanese defeat of the Russians in 1904, to Lord Curzon's well-meaning but inept attempts to reform Indian education and to partition Bengal, but, above all, the results of three quarters of a century of English education began to make themselves increasingly felt. "That English became the common language among educated Indians, that it is the language of Locke (philosopher of the Whig revolution of 1688), and of many other defenders of liberty, and that the British regarded themselves as having taught democracy to the world, inevitably led Punjabis, Tamils, Mahrattas, Bengalis, and others, to ask themselves why the privileges of liberty were not for them also."*

While the British people as a whole looked with an understanding eye on the budding nationalist movement in India, it was inevitable that harassed British officials, responsible for law and order on the spot, should take a less indulgent line. Repression, natural to bureaucrats in all countries under all regimes, was the obvious solution, and police reports, sedition charges and trials, set up a vicious circle of reprisal and counter-reprisal.

The story is not a happy one in the telling but, looking back, a Briton can console himself with the reflection that if he has injustices and tragedies to regret, Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of

* Jossleyn Hennessy, *India and Pakistan in World Politics*, p. 16.

non-violence could only have been born, and realised to the extent that it was, in a country governed by rulers responsive to their consciences and to public opinion. Had India been ruled by Hitler, Gandhiji would have been liquidated long before his country had had time to hear of him, or if Hitler had allowed him to linger on in some concentration camp, he could have contributed no more towards ending Hitler's regime than did the heroic Pastor Niemoller, that is, precisely nothing. But the Indo-British story had its happy ending on August 15, 1947, when a "sane and civilised relationship"* was lastingly established between the two peoples.

There were three Indian reactions to British repression. In order to keep clear of trouble, some were at pains to avoid consorting with political agitators or suspects or to have anything to do with the nationalist movement. Others, on the contrary, went out of their way to defy the law and found satisfaction in courting gaol. A third group, to which G. D. Birla and Pande belonged, made no secret of their nationalist views, and would not have flinched from prison if the occasion demanded it, but saw no purpose in courting imprisonment which would bring to an end the more useful services that they could render by remaining outside.

The police made no distinction between the second and third groups. To them, G. D. Birla and S. D. Pande were no mere suspects but militant nationalists, self-proclaimed by their deeds and their openly expressed opinions. What is more the inhabitants of an autocratically governed Indian state, without the shadow of a constitution, could be harassed to a degree that was not possible in British India, where newspapers flourished, where public opinion was active, where charges could be argued in a court of law, and where the authorities were reluctant to have recourse to imprisonment without trial. The Indian states regarded themselves as bulwarks against seditionists and were quick to jump as heavily as they could on troublesome types.

Pande, however, was not a subject of Jaipur but of British India; he was not used to the kow-towing and fawning atmosphere of an Indian state, and he was not the type who was prepared to submit to it.

Pande applied for recognition of his degree classes in 1930 and at first his request was well received. An official visit to Pilani by H. H. the Maharaja of Jaipur for the formal opening

* Cf. Thompson & Garrat, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 655.

of the degree-class building was arranged. Now, decorating the walls of various rooms in the College were photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and his son, Jawarharlal, and of other nationalist leaders. Friends warned Pande that these pictures would create a bad impression on the Maharaja and his entourage and urged that they should be removed for the occasion. The boys also wore for their P.T. home-spun *khadi* cloth, symbol of the anti-foreign, *swaraj* movement, and Pande was urged to let them wear mill-made cloth on the day of the ceremony.

Pande refused. Apart from the question of principle as to whether the State had the right to dictate the political views of its subjects, the suggestion that the pictures should be removed for the day and *khadi* kept out of sight, and both restored after the visitors had departed, offended Pande's sense of honesty. He had done nothing of which he was ashamed and he refused to behave as though he had.

The Maharaja and his staff duly visited the College and opened the new building. They were given a display of P.T. and of scouting. Lt.-Colonel B. L. Cole, one of the Maharaja's British officials, congratulated Pande on a "fine show" and on the school's good discipline, and the Maharaja was pleased with all that he saw. But two other officials, one of whom was the Inspector General of Police, were not so pleased. All that they seem to have noticed during their visit were the pictures on the walls and the *khadi* cloth. They condemned Pilani as "a hot-bed of firebrands". They reminded the Council of State that a political meeting—in itself an outrageous phenomenon on state territory—had been held earlier in the year on the occasion of Pandit Motilal Nehru's death. Pande argued that a memorial service to pay a last tribute to a great man was not a political meeting. The State Director of Public Instruction replied asking for an assurance that such ceremonies would not be repeated. Pande refused.

The net result of all this was that some time after the Maharaja's state visit, Pande received a letter from the Director of Public Instruction informing him that the State could not permit degree classes at Pilani. This was a grievous disappointment to Pande and to the Birla Education Trust. G. D. Birla took the matter up at the very highest level—with the Viceroy in New Delhi, and, in London, with the Secretary of State himself. He maintained that the raising of an intermediate college to degree status was not a political but an educational matter. In vain. He was heard politely, but

nothing was done.

It is curious to consider what a paralysing effect anything labelled "security" has on men of otherwise exceptional gifts and intelligence. You can disagree as frankly as you like with a departmental report on such controversial matters as the exchange value of the rupee, or expound unorthodox views about birth control and village uplift, and you will be heard with interest, indeed often with a respect proportionate to your divergence from the official line, but the appearance of a security report at once creates the fundamentalist attitude of mind of the "bible belt" in the United States: to question it is a combined display of blasphemy and lunacy. Once, therefore, that anyone is listed as a suspect by a security service, his name is liable to be handed down by each Director of Intelligence for all eternity; the mere presence of his name on the suspect list ensures that all that he does is given the worst interpretation, and so his dossier grows year by year!

The scouting expeditions undertaken by the Birla Scouts, the picnic outings organised by the tutorial groups, the visits to nearby villages for rural educational work—all were watched with goggling eyes by the local police and interpreted as a new technique of avoiding infiltration by police observers and as camouflage to enable the wicked Congress Party men of the Birla Education Trust to spread revolutionary doctrines round the countryside. Irritating incidents—small in themselves but harassing in their cumulative effect—were constant.

On one occasion, a Deputy Superintendent of Police "declared" a troop of the Birla Scouts "to be under arrest" (whatever that meant). Pande protested to the Inspector General of Police. The Inspector General replied that the boys had been arrested for picketing a liquor shop. Very good, retorted Pande, in that case why let them go? A charge should be formulated and the boys prosecuted in accordance with the law. But that was a step which the State, when dealing with Pande, hesitated to take. The truth was that he was a thorn in their side. Other people, when threatened by the authorities, quailed before the power and majesty of the State; afraid to stand upon such legal rights as Jaipur admitted, they fell into line at once and modified their behaviour as required. But Pande was not afraid—quietly, politely, firmly—to beard the mighty in person in the state capital.

The Jaipur Council of State directed that no teacher should be appointed without official approval. Whether this rule

was specially directed against the Birla Education Trust, I cannot say, but its vexatious effect was felt in Pilani. Under Pande's reorganisation and expansion the staff grew steadily, but after interviewing candidates and making his choice, Pande had to notify the Director of Public Institution and could make no appointment permanent until his approval was received following an investigation by the police that might take weeks or months.

Matters came to a head when the police reported unfavourably on three new appointees: a Physical Training Instructor, whose chief fault seemed to be that he happened to come from Wardha, where Mahatma Gandhi had established his headquarters; a Professor of English, who was assumed to be a terrorist just because he was a Bengali; and a junior teacher, who seemed to have been classed as dangerous because his father had failed to produce a sufficient bribe for the local inspector who came round to make enquiries about him.

The Council of State called upon Pande to dismiss this monstrous trio. If Pande had acquiesced, he would have ended their careers, because with the record against them of a dismissal on security grounds, no other school in the State would have dared to employ them, and most in British India would have hesitated.

Pande packed a bedding roll and travelled laboriously across country to Jaipur city, where he interviewed the Director of Public Instruction. He urged that the three teachers should be informed of the charges against them and allowed to reply, *or* that they should be publicly prosecuted in the courts, *or* that any one member of the Birla Education Trust should be taken into confidence and given a chance to consider the facts. If none of these courses were accepted, the charges should be withdrawn. The Director of Public Instruction was sympathetic, but he regretted that this was not an educational but a security matter and was therefore outside his province. He had merely passed on the order that he had received. In a friendly way, he warned Pande not to do anything headstrong.

"You're new to this place," he said kindly. "You come from British India. But don't forget you're in an Indian state now. You'll soon get used to our ways. After all, do these three men matter particularly? If the State doesn't like them, it's not your fault. Let them go. You've done your best for them. They can't blame you."

Pande's whole nature rebelled against such cowardly tactics,

but all that he said, calmly enough, was:

"I'm sorry, I can't agree. Today you make me dismiss these fellows. That means that tomorrow you can dismiss others, until the entire staff that I've picked for myself will be replaced by men chosen by you. I'm going to take the matter up with the Minister of Education."

"You're a headstrong young man," the Director of Public Instruction said with a sigh.

The Minister received Pande with the same courtesy and bland professions of inability to interfere with a security matter.

"This is an order from the Council of State," he said with a deprecatory smile. "I'm only a channel of communication."

"I should have thought that in your very capacity as Minister of Education, you would feel that the case of these teachers concerns you directly," Pande said. "I consider them the best men available for the jobs. If criminal acts can be proved against them, they should be sent to prison. If they are wrongly accused, you should be the first person to wish to protect educationists."

"Now, look," the Minister said kindly. "You're a headstrong young man and—"

"I'm new to the State and haven't learnt your ways, but I soon will," Pande finished for him. "But let me say this: I have no intention of learning new ways. There are not two kinds of justice—one for British India and one for the states. I won't dismiss these men unless they are given a chance to reply to the charges, or a court condemns them, or a member of the Trust is put in a position to form an independent opinion."

"You don't know what you're doing," the Minister said gravely.

"I do," said Pande with a chuckle. "I'm defying the State. Good morning."

It so happened that a new Director of Public Instruction, an Englishman, was appointed shortly after whose duty it became to issue a final notice to Pande to dismiss the three teachers.

Pande repeated the laborious cross-country trip to Jaipur. He pointed out that this quarrel had hitherto been an obscure incident in an obscure state, but that the arrival of a European would, if the matter were pressed, transform it into an all-India show-down which the nationalist papers from Calcutta to Bombay and from Madras to Lahore would splash on their

front pages. What was more, a row between an Indian and a European would lead to questions in the British House of Commons. Pande repeated his request for investigation or prosecution, but he warned the Director of Public Instruction that if this was again rejected, rather than dismiss his three teachers, he was, with G. D. Birla's agreement, prepared to close down the Trust's college in the State, and to re-open it at the nearest point across the border in British India, out of reach of the State authorities. He recognised that there were gaps in the protection that the courts of British India could give him, but the courts did nevertheless exist and to invoke their aid would at the very least create a stink from one end of India to the other, the unsavouriness of which would be carried overseas.

Pande said all this in his usual quiet manner without once raising his voice. He parted from the British Director on excellent terms. And from that day on, he heard nothing more from the authorities. Faced with Pande's ultimatum, the Council of State decided that discretion was the better part of valour.

After he had cleared the decks of past accumulations of rubbish and got his College running smoothly, Pande set about trying out in practice his theory concerning the combination of handicrafts with academic studies. He introduced craft work in 1931, and, proceeding slowly and carefully, felt justified in making it compulsory for all classes in 1935. Facilities and equipment for different crafts were steadily increased until by 1944 they included: Tailoring; Carpentry and Lacquer work; Hand-spinning; Carpet-making; Cloth printing and dyeing; Leather work; Laundry; Book-binding. Printing, and Hand Paper-making. Each student spends between two and three periods a week on one of these crafts, the object of which is to develop intelligence, concentration and observation, in ways untouched by books and blackboards. Craft work coordinates brain and muscle, provides opportunities for the imaginative use of leisure, and, one hopes, inspires respect and sympathy for labour, thereby, one also hopes, lessening the gap between the social classes.

India overflows with educational theories. Few get beyond the stage of talk, and of those which are put into practice still fewer survive after the first enthusiasm has come up against realities. At Pilani, however, the combination of academic studies with elaborate craft work does not merely survive; it

flourishes. And, having ourselves studied the system at work on the spot, Lora and I submit that it must be classed among the most successful educational experiments made in India or in any other country. It was significant that when the scheme was inaugurated by Pande, it was accepted without difficulty by the younger boys, whereas their elders, who had already absorbed social prejudices against work with the hands, grumbled. Once the younger boys had grown into seniors and the idea that craft work was a normal activity, involving no loss of dignity, had permeated the whole school, there was no further trouble.

Pande made his Physical Education scheme compulsory in 1933. The programme covered (1) gymnastics; (2) athletics; (3) the arts of self-defence (*Lathi, Patta,* wrestling, etc.); (4) swimming and (5) major games (football, hockey, cricket, etc.).

G. D. Birla and Pande have always been pre-occupied with the health of Pilani's boys and girls. The diet of each student is planned for 3,000 to 3,200 calories a day, which is probably between two and three times what many a villager gets. Pande inaugurated three meals a day whereas the average Indian eats only twice. Much of the debility and fatigue from which many Indians suffer is due to inadequate food eaten at too long intervals. Since 1933, all Pilani students have received a bowl of milk per day from G. D. Birla's model dairy farm, which he handed over to the Trust as a going concern. Without this farm it would have been impossible to obtain milk from local sources in sufficient quantity for the ever-growing number of students. In 1952, the Trust Farm owned a herd of 138 cows.

Pande is among the few people who have held both military and naval commands. At Banaras, he commanded D Company of the 3rd United Provinces Battalion of the University Training Corps from 1922. When he left for Pilani, he was a Captain. In 1943, the Royal Indian Navy were anxious to set up an all-India centre for the training of engine-room artificers and out of the several possibilities before them, their final choice fell on Pilani. Their request to the Birla Education Trust met with a warm response and a civilian naval centre was opened. When, later, this was converted into His Majesty's Indian Ship *Pilani,* Pande as Principal was given the rank of Lt.-Commander. The workshops eventually served as a stop-gap for the Engineering College until new ones could be built.

THE VANISHED princely states of India were able to attract men of outstanding parts and ability into their service, and the name of Sir Mirza Ismail is memorable among a great company that included Sir T. Vijayaraghavacharya, Sir Gopalswami Ayyangar, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, and the late Sir Akbar Hydari. Sir Mirza Ismail had been Prime Minister of his own home state of Mysore for fifteen years when, in June, 1942, he came to Jaipur where he was to remain for four years until he left to become Prime Minister of Hyderabad.

The thunders of the nationalist movement echoed but faintly over the lazy backwaters of states' absolutism and many a prince and *dewan* believed that, whatever might happen in British India, they were safe from political change if only they repressed "seditionists" sternly enough and prevented the spread of new ideas. Sir Mirza Ismail was among the few who gauged the significance of Indian nationalism, and he never concealed his view that it was wiser to discard from strength in order to effect a working compromise than to be driven from pillar to post and forced into grudging, ungraceful, and damaging concessions. An autocrat in his manner, he is a liberal in his outlook and deeds.

Above all, there is nothing trivial about Sir Mirza.

When I spent a week as his guest in Hyderabad in 1947, he took me for a drive round the city especially in order to show me the marvellous new vistas that he had opened up.

"How on earth do you arrange for views like these?" I asked, impressed.

"By pulling down anything in the way," Sir Mirza said. "I must have pulled half the walls in the city down by now ... Take a look round at night. I'm having all the show places flood-lit—the High Court, the Char Minar, and so on."

He took me to the site where excavations were already well in hand for the vast pleasure lake and irrigation system that he was planning.

"I want to make Hyderabad the cleanest and most beautiful city in India," he said, and held forth engagingly in crores of rupees, millions of tons, and billions of cubic feet, interrupting himself only to give an instruction to his secretary, his architect, or his engineer, who were accompanying us.

When, on arrival in Jaipur, Sir Mirza learnt from Pandeji that there was a state ordinance enjoining that no primary school could be opened without permission, that no teacher

drawing a salary of Rs. 15/- a month or over could be employed unless a district magistrate certified that he was a state subject, he was shocked that the authorities had the time to waste on such piffling trifles.

"For God's sake!" he said impatiently to Pandeji, "Just ignore that order. Disregard it. Take no notice of it."

"I might if I were Prime Minister," Pande laughed. "Being only a schoolmaster hampers me. I have to obey the law."

"Well, change it yourself," Sir Mirza said. "Get a pen and paper and write an order rescinding the present order. I'll sign it."

That is just the sort of gesture in which Sir Mirza delights.

Thus encouraged, Pande told the Prime Minister of his disappointment over the College's status. That the Jaipur authorities had thought it worth while for reasons of personal or political spite to refuse to raise an Intermediate College to degree status struck Sir Mirza as the apotheosis of pettifoggery.

"You can open degree classes whenever you like," he said.

Formal permission was received in July, 1943.

In 1929-30, the Intermediate College classes (as opposed to the High School) totalled 12 boys and 8 teachers. Under Pande's leadership and drive, numbers rose to 119 boys and 11 teachers in 1930-31. Numbers then gradually crept up to 190 and 14 in 1940-41. The next year there was a jump to 238 and 16, and since then numbers, coinciding with new building, have risen rapidly until in 1951, the College consisted of 587 boys and 11 girls, looked after by 50 teachers. This ratio of 11.74 students to each teacher can hold its own with the high standards set in the private colleges of the wealthier democracies, and challenges comparison with the average Indian college in which the ratio of students to teachers is apt to be much higher.

Of these 587 students, only 60 were taking Arts courses.* This preponderance of Commerce and Science students is doubtless in part due to the personal interest in Mathematics and Science, and "modern" subjects generally, that Pandeji brought to Pilani in 1929, but it is also a reflection of the state of education in India as a whole. Since the inception of Western education, Government services, and employers in industry and commerce, have been flooded with applications

* Arts include History, Economics and Statistics, Civics and Politics, Hindi and Sanskrit, English, Philosophy, Ethics, Psychology, Mathematics and Astronomy, Music and Painting (Extra-Curricular).

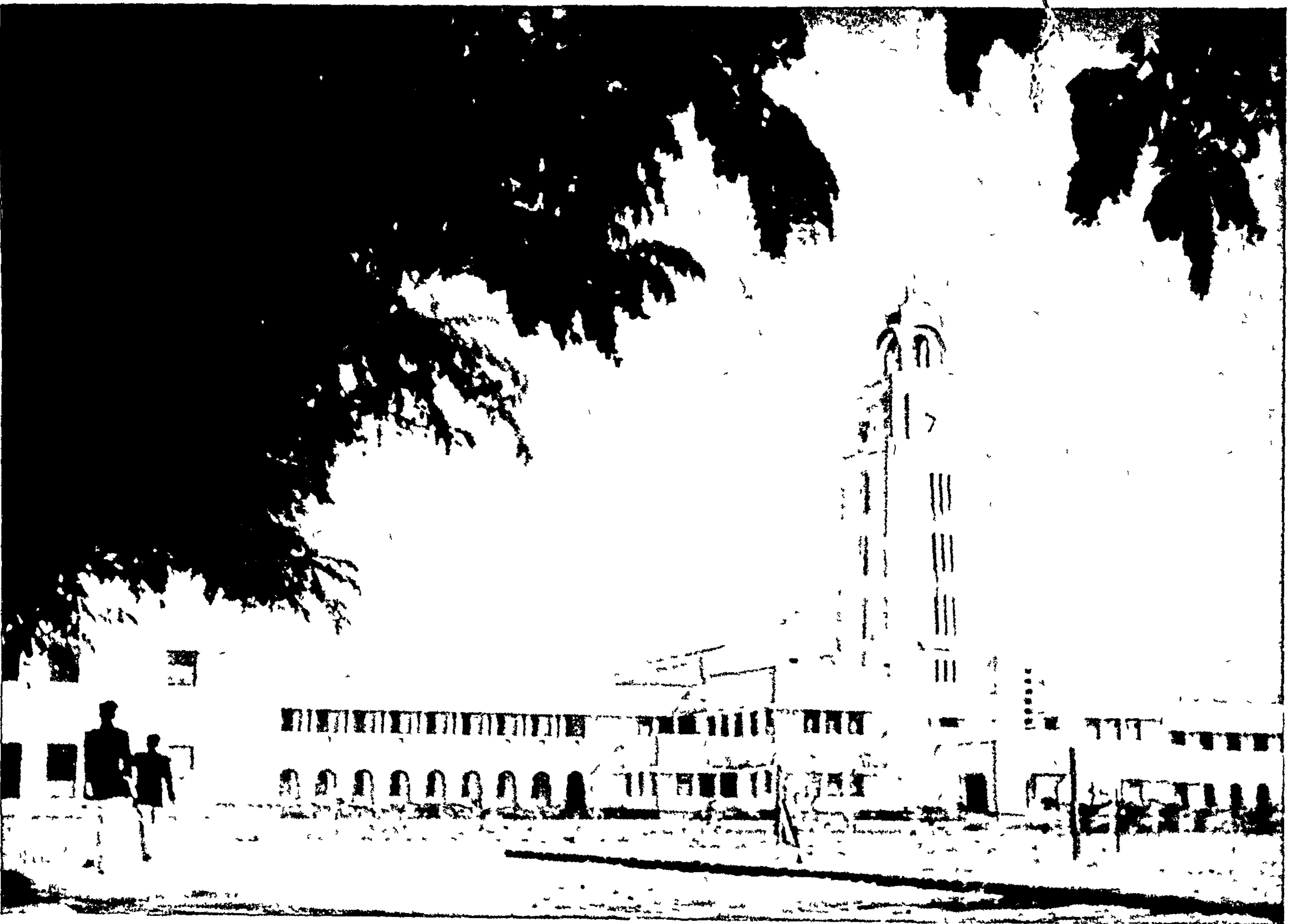
for jobs from Arts graduates. For every vacancy there are not scores but hundreds and even thousands of applicants. In 1951, no less than 2,000 candidates presented themselves for the Indian Administrative Service (successor of the I.C.S.), of which only 120 were taken. The overproduction of Arts students in relation to the supply of jobs available was typified by a *peon** whom I had during my years of service with the Government of India: he was a matriculate. The degrees with the highest commercial value are today in scientific and other specialist subjects. In Pilani, as in all the colleges and universities that I visited elsewhere, it is in the laboratories, and at the lectures on "modern" subjects generally, that you will find the bulk of the students.

In 1951-52, Birla College had 450 students enrolled in Science which includes Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Zoology, Mathematics and Astronomy. Commerce, covering Bookkeeping, Accountancy, Business Methods, Economics, Regional and Commercial Geography, and one special subject chosen from Stenotyping, Banking, Mathematics, and Industrial Organisation, totalled 190 students.

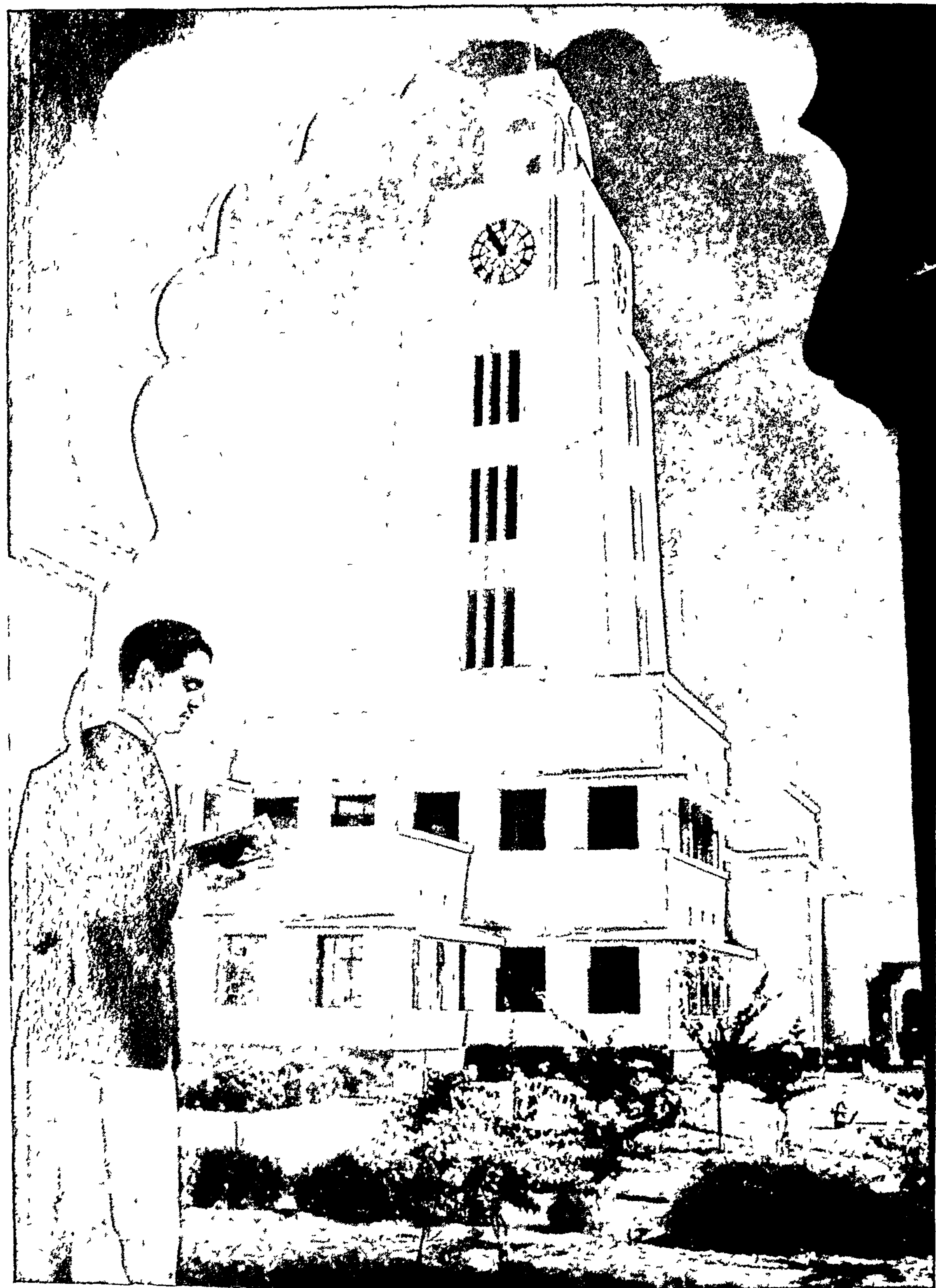
But the school on which the Birla College especially prides itself is Pharmacy, introduced by Mr. M. L. Schroff after he became Principal in January, 1949. Mr. Schroff is a widely travelled man who has had a career which I see that the Birla College Magazine (Golden Jubilee issue, 1951) describes as "adventurous and chequered." On completing his education, he went on a tour of the Far East ending up in Tokio where he taught Hindusthani and worked on the staff of a Japanese newspaper published in English. Next, he voyaged to the United States where, in 1926, he was the first student to secure his B.A. degree with honours in Chemistry at Cornell University. From Cornell, he went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) where he took his Master's degree in Chemistry and Microbiology. He was evidently not afraid of hard work, because, simultaneously with his M.I.T. course, he was attending lectures at Harvard and working his way through college in the traditional American style as a chemical factory hand at Maynard (Mass.), involving a 40 minute train journey twice a day. Returning to India in 1929, he tried various industrial ventures.

The Birla College Magazine's biography of Mr. Schroff

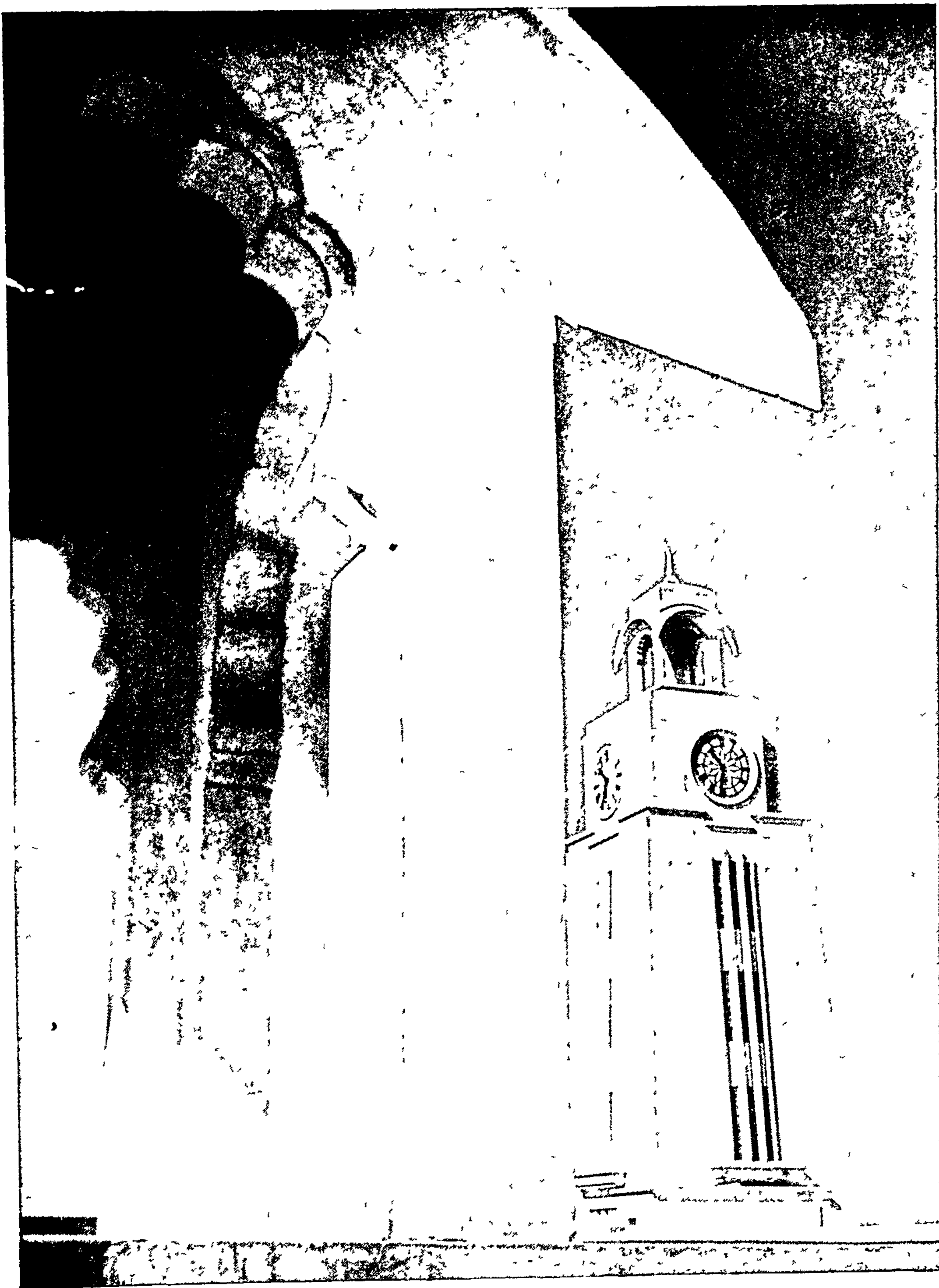
* Messenger.



13. The main block. Birla College to left of tower. Administrative offices under tower Engineering College to right



14 "O for colour!" The flowers in front were vivid scarlet, the walls dazzling white, the sky deep blue. Administrative offices See page 229



15 Architectural contrasts



16. A view of the Library which contains 37,000 volumes. See page 302

17. "Off for the holidays!" Boys' baggage leaving Pilani Note bullock cart wheels with pneumatic tires

contains the sentence: "The late Bishen Das Basil (Mr. Schroff's father-in-law) had also manufactured experimentally ten typewriters but, according to Sri Schroff, greed, selfishness and lack of foresight on the part of capitalists killed the enterprise." It strikes me as refreshingly untotalitarian that one can stub one's toe upon such remarks, lying about unheeded where they were let fall, in the pages of the official organ of an institution which owes its existence to a member of this greedy and selfish class.

Mr. Schroff came to the Birla College after twelve years as head of the Department of Pharmaceutics at Banaras Hindu University. He left Pilani in 1952 to take up an industrial career.

The Birla School of Pharmacy had already in the first three years of its existence gained a name for its fine equipment and for the high standard of its 60 students. In 1950-51, out of 30 finalists, there were seven "firsts" and 23 "seconds." The reputation of the Indian pharmaceutical industry suffers from the widespread diffusion of spurious drugs, and this largely explains the preference of the public for foreign manufactures; according to the Birla College Magazine (February, 1951) no less than 70 per cent of the drugs used in India are imported. The school therefore has a role to play in building up traditions of professional integrity in the Indian industry.

The practical pharmaceutics laboratory lingers in my memory for what, to a layman, were the exciting apparatuses with which you could, for example, fill tubes with toothpaste (instead of emptying them like everyone else), or put sugar coating on pills, which seems a delightful occupation for the metaphorically minded.

IT IS INTERESTING to talk to the survivors of the keen young staff that Pande gathered round him. Such Pilani "characters" as Professor R. S. Yajnik, now Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Shri S. R. Mital, Professor of Mathematics, Shri Hans Raj Bhatia,* Professor of Philosophy, will tell you of the excitement of those heroic times when it seemed as though there was a new experiment to be tried out, or a new subject to be launched, or a new school to be opened every morning, and they dropped into bed every night exhausted but with the glorious feeling that they were marching into ever expanding horizons. Although today they are successful heads of col-

* Professor Bhatia has left Pilani since this was written.

leges or faculties, the old stagers frankly regret the years when everything in Pilani was a bit of a picnic amidst the sand dunes, which have vanished as completely as the Fleet River from London, or the swamps from the Calcutta *maidan.*

As against one Intermediate College with 275 boys in 1929, there were in February, 1952, 5,442 students distributed as follows:

Birla College of Arts, Science and Commerce (M.A., M.Sc, B.Ph., M.Com.) ...	686
Birla College of Engineering (B.E., Mech. & Elec.)	392
Birla High School	815
Birla Balika Vidyapeeth for girls (now raised to Intermediate College)	240
Birla Montessori School	276
Birla Compulsory Primary Schools	
5 for boys	426
3 for girls	222
Birla Village Schools	
6 Middle Schools, 3 Lower Middle, 37 Primary	2,385
Total: ...	5,442

Institutions in other parts of India:

Technological Institution of Textiles, at Bhiwani ...	59
Birla Vishwakarma Mahavidyalaya, at Anand ...	499
Birla Vidyamandir, at Naini Tal ...	238
Grand Total ...	6,238

Other activities include:

Birla Sarvajanik Hospital
Matri Seva Sadan
Model Dairy and Farm, with 308 acres and 138 head of cattle.
The Irrigation Department, controlling tube wells with an output of 75,000 gallons per hour.

Buildings:

Main Block of Colleges of Arts, Science, Commerce, and Engineering built at a cost of Rs. 35 lakhs (£262,500 or $750,000)	350,000 sq. ft.
Total area of all buildings in February, 1952	681,000 sq. ft.

Shiva Ganga circular boating canal and swimming pool is a quarter of a mile in circumference.

Here is the record of the Trust's capital expenditure during the twenty-three years of its existence ending December, 1952:

Bungalows for staff accommodation	...	Rs. 1,320,000
Power House and Dairy	...	750,000
Equipment	...	1,600,000
Library	...	240,000
Technological Institute of Textiles, Bhiwani	.	1,100,000
Vidyamandir, Naini Tal	...	660,000
Vishvakarma Mahavidyalaya	...	2,500,000
Colleges, hostels, playgrounds, etc.	...	7,500,000
		Rs 15,670,000
		Or £ 1,175,000
		Or $ 3,361,215

The Trust's annual recurring expenditure in 1952 was Rs. 1,647,018 or £123,526, or $353,284. Of this, approximately 65 per cent was met by fees and 35 per cent from the Trust's funds.

Pilani, sigh the old stagers, is no longer an outpost in the desert; it is vast—a university town in all but name. Pande has been wafted away from them to the distant administrative heights of the Secretaryship of the Trust. No longer is it possible for students and teachers, or even teachers and teachers, to meet for discussion of the day's programme and problems. Something of the impersonality of a great institution has replaced the intimate comradeship of the early days. When Pilani was young, the old stagers recall, each newly arrived teacher took his meals for one week in the houses of each of the other professors in turn. The village was so primitive that it supplied nothing but the simple needs of its inhabitants. For example, since scarcely anyone wore a western type of shoe there was no cobbler to mend them. Since the villagers used twigs to clean their teeth, you could not buy tooth brushes or tooth paste. Because there were no market gardeners, you could buy no vegetables except carrots and radishes. And so on. Accordingly, at intervals one of the masters undertook the long cross-country trek to Delhi to do the errands of the whole community. In their quiet lives, the return of the errand-wallah was an event. He arrived in triumph upon a camel, festooned with mended shoes, vegetables, newspapers, books, toys; bulging with mysterious and exciting parcels.

These are the sentimental regrets of the old stagers in all great enterprises who look back with a glow upon the strug-

gles of their youth. What is exciting about the work of the Birla Education Trust is that it is providing a new generation of principals and teachers with opportunities for adventure. Talk to men like Professor Lakshmi Narayanan of the Engineering College, or to women like Mrs. Devaki Upadhaya of the Girls' School, and you are lifted by the enthusiasm of forward looking people who feel that the ball is at their feet. There is no hardening of the Trust's arteries. New ideas, new buildings, new schools, crop up in every conversation. Pilani is still pioneering.

And what of Shukdev Pande in 1953 ? No longer camped in a hut with a corrugated roof, he sits in his concrete prairie of a study under the clock tower in the echoing halls of the main block. The atmosphere is modern—almost aggressively progressive—from the great wall-windows to the plastic topped desk, and the chromium tubed chairs which stand for ever ready on the opposite side of the table to him, sometimes in disarray as if the parting guest had sped. There he sits tirelessly writing, or listening with a charming courtesy to proposals, schemes, ideas, or complaints. Pande is a sympathetic listener, but, as Pilani grew in size, he developed his listening from a natural interest into a policy. Over the years, as the tasks of administration grew more complex, as numbers rose, and new institutions came into being, he assumed the role of a human lightning conductor. Pilani's acres of white buildings would not be there today had it not been for Pande's ability to listen in long spells. He is, however, no plaster saint : his patience has limits and he is capable of indignation and anger, but these are, as it were, his reserves—all the more formidable for being rarely called upon.

Nowadays Pande bears upon his square shoulders the cares of a V.I.P. At all official functions his presence is required, and on all occasions important in the eyes of the students, he is in request for a speech. He presents the prizes at tournaments ; he opens new buildings; he cuts ribbons across new roads and canals. He is not among those heads of institutions who regard these routine duties as a bore ; on the contrary, they are means of assessing individuals, of gauging atmospheres, of spotting hidden tensions, and of injecting a word of advice, encouragement, or dissuasion ; in short, of keeping in touch with all that is being thought and done.

Of course, there are moments when generals come upon a field situation which makes them regret their rank ; they

long to plunge into the rough and tumble and straighten things out the way that they did when they were battalion commanders, and I'm not saying that Pande is above such longings. But he is as wise as he is experienced and when I have mentioned some point to him, he has replied: "I know. I know. But you can't *force* people to do these things. You can suggest and persuade, and after that if they don't follow your advice, they must learn by their own mistakes and experience. Not everyone is gifted in the same way. *A* can bring off a scheme that *B* can't and, in turn, *A* will fail in some technique that is easy for *B*. You've got to discover what people are good at and push them into it."

Anyone who has lived in a community, whether it be military, monastic, or educational, knows that personalities clash, and that whether storms are prolonged or subside quickly depends on the character of the man at the head. The way in which the Principal is referred to behind his back is often revealing. Such schoolboy epithets as "The Beast" or "The Stinker" speak for themselves, while "Old Bill" and "Monty" suggest the affection that Haig-Brown inspired in his boys in the last century and Montgomery in his troops in this. For years Pande has been known to his staff and to the boys and girls of Pilani as "Pandeji". Indian readers will appreciate the significance of this, but for those of the West it should be explained that the suffix implies both affection and respect. The nearest Western equivalent that occurs to me is the French *Mon Président* which conveys much the same manifestation of affection and recognition of respect due.

I rank Pandeji with the great originating principals: Arnold of Rugby, Haig-Brown of Charterhouse, Sanderson of Oundle, Hahn of Gordonstoun, Malaviya of Banaras.

AN ANTHOLOGY

FROM "THE BIRLA COLLEGE MAGAZINE"

IN describing each Pilani institution, I have had difficulty in deciding what to choose to illustrate the extra-curricular activities of each without being repetitious. Games and P.T. are compulsory in all, and magazines, debates, dramatics and fairs, are common to all. When it came to the Birla College, however, there was an obvious choice: the College Magazine, which has had a continuous existence since April, 1930, six months after Pandeji's arrival.

The Magazine's first proclaimed object is to provide a re-

cord of the achievements and aspirations of teachers and taught, and its second to offer students opportunities for self-expression. The reader cannot judge the extent to which I have had recourse to the Magazine not only for facts and figures but for interpretations of the achievements and aspirations of the professors and students, and must take my word that the Magazine seems to have fulfilled its first object efficiently and adequately. On the other hand, I propose by means of an anthology to give the reader a chance to form his own estimate of my view that, in fulfilling its second object, the Magazine has brought literary talent to light and revealed its standard of teaching in English.

The critical English reader will occasionally find un-English phraseology and instances of stilted language or *clichés* of thought, but surely the point about these compositions is that they were not written by Englishmen in their native tongue but by Indians in a foreign language, and I submit that these Indians are entitled to admiration for the high standard that they attain. The average age of entry to the Birla College is 15, and the average leaving age is 21. I wonder how many British or American students between these ages would be capable of expressing themselves in French with what, when all possible criticisms have been made, can be reasonably termed the fluency, ease, and authority of these Birla College students in English.

The Birla College Magazine is divided into an English and a Hindi section of about equal size. I regret that I am unable to judge the merits of the Hindi section, but since the students attain such high standards in English, I presume that they reach still higher levels when writing in a language over which they have full command and whose cultural and social traditions are their own.

The compiler of an anthology naturally picks out items that interest, move, or make him laugh the most, and he would not be human if he did not itch to write a preface pointing out the merits of his selections, and, in his enthusiasm, generally breathing over the reader's shoulder and nudging his elbow. It is with difficulty that I refrain from so doing and, instead, allow my authors to speak for themselves. I confine myself to the observation that what impresses me about these writers is the freshness of their imagination, their frequent poetry, wit and humour, *and the social consciousness, or awareness of the movement of modern ideas in ancient India, that they show or imply*. The files of the Birla College Magazine prove

that its contributors have never lacked ideas.

ADVENTURE

by R. Dwivedi

Let me out of your lap, mother,
And I'll go and cross the seven seas.
I shall climb the high snows and fly up into the air,
I shall kiss the moon and fold the clouds in my embrace.
I shall dance with the lightning and catch the twinkling
stars—
I'll tie them all into the corner of my kerchief
And make them shine in my palm like fire-flies.

MAY I COME IN, SIR?

by Ghanshyam Das Verma, Class IX A

A boy came to the door of his classroom. In a shrill voice he asked the teacher, "May I come in, sir?"

At this time the teacher was teaching easy fractions in algebra. His mind was exhausted by the loud noise of the students and when he heard these words he flew into a passion.

He said to himself, "This naughty boy always comes late and knows nothing and is simply making noise." Then the teacher replied, "No, sir", and resumed teaching: "Yes, you Mr. Girish Chandra, simplify these brackets. What did you get after multiplying (—1) and (—1)?" Girish Chandra stood still like a statue and did not utter even a single word.

"Yes, (—1) × (—1) is equal to (1)", said the teacher by way of encouragement.

The student who was standing outside, again said. "May I come in, sir?"

The teacher replied, "No, sir".

The student entered the room.

When the teacher saw that the student had entered the room without his permission he was overwhelmed with fury and said in a thundering voice, "Why have you entered the room without my permission? Get out, I say."

The student answered, "You have just said, sir, that (—1) into (—1) is equal to (1) and I thought "No, sir" into "No, sir" is also equal to "Yes, sir".

At this, the other students laughed so loudly that the *peon* at once rang the bell. And, instead of the student, the teacher had to go.

WHEN FANCY TAKES A FLIGHT

by AMBIKESHWAR

The pleasure of sitting in a chair browsing over your favourite book is marked by the annoyance of being bitten in the leg by a black beetle, or being struck in the face by a flying beetle who took to wing for the sheer joy of it, or of being stared at by the green grasshopper who with his hunch-back becomes doubly terrible, or again of the tiny mosquitoes and wheat-flies, one of which falls in your eye and gives you excessive pain until you rub it with the palm of your hand for relief. All the pain drives you mad with a strong desire to shut up the book and put out the light.

In a fit of fury, I wished I were a lizard and could kill all these naughty insects with one movement of the jaw and in one throw of the tongue would that ugly beetle go down my throat into my gizzard.

Suddenly I saw my wish fulfilled; I winked my eyes lizard-fashion and wriggled my tail with a malicious grin. I scrubbed my scraggy skin against the wall and seemed to enjoy the change. I espied another lizard on the wall hunting a pack of termites, while a lady lizard and her daughter were looking with interest at the game of skill displayed by the male lizard and were discussing his marvellous feats in an audible chit-chat. I wriggled my tail again for joy and yawned out my lethargy. I crawled upon my stomach to meet the young lady and her mother and on my way to them I accosted Mr. Lizard by raising my head and then bringing it back again to the wall. He returned the courtesy with due ceremony and gave up the game to accompany me to his wife and daughter, and went out again to get a fresh catch for the visitor.

Mrs. Lizard was a blonde young lady with a fine scaly skin and big bright eyes. She had a pink-coloured tongue and a tail tapering at the end. Her chin was very attractive and her jaw was firm and determined. She was nearly five inches and a half long from chin to tail, and, as she herself told me, she had made many conquests when she was young. "But Mr. Lizard is a little jealous", she said, "and does not allow me to move abroad, though my mother always blames me for my weakness". Here she sobbed but was up to her sense of motherhood again. "Liz", she said turning to her daughter, "go and see if our hole is ready for rest, and get one more bed for our guest". Liz circled round her fat mother, and

wagged her tail as a sign of obedience and was soon out of our sight.

"She is only a child as yet", continued the mother observing my attentions to the graceful movements of her daughter. "But she is growing very fast and perhaps she will choose her husband next year". Mr. Lizard now came to us and after wagging his tail said that there was excellent game that day. "Scrabs and cockroaches, locusts and walking sticks", said Mr. Lizard licking his lips as he named these dainty dishes, "there is such a variety of them today and we may, if fortune favours, hunt a scorpion if we can find one". So saying he turned his face downwards and so did we, and lo! we discovered the truth of what Mr. Lizard said. By this time Liz returned and after whispering something in private to her mother we four sallied forth to kill the game. "A hunt!" cried Miss Lizard in an ecstasy of joy and budding youth as she passed by me wagging her tail. She was four inches long, and bore her mother's features, with big blooming eyes darting from her forehead. Unlike her mother she was thin, but her lips were pursed like a rose-bud, and it was only when she opened her mouth to catch a huge moth that I discovered the potentialities of that tiny creature.

We stationed ourselves at four ends of the wall, and took our fill of the dainties. Mrs. Lizard who chose to stay near the ceiling could dart from the ceiling to the wall and back again in a trice although she expected to have her new lizardling within the next few weeks. After two hours, Mrs. Lizard proposed to retire. Mr. Lizard went to and fro in search of a scorpion, but in vain. "My husband is very fond of scorpions", said Mrs. Lizard, "and he is very expert in hunting scorpions. Are you not, dear?" Mr. Lizard nodded his head in ,assent and said, "I won the S.K.M. while I was in the Academie de Lizards, though I could not distinguish myself in studies".

"Will you please tell us in what academy you have studied and in what game you have distinguished yourself there?"

"I am sorry, madam", I said with a stammer, "I have not even won the B.K.M., but I have read many books on all sorts of subjects".

Miss Lizard gave me a look of scorn and said to her mother, "Why, mummy, I could kill 50 moths an hour, couldn't I? And did I not help daddy to kill a scorpion last year?"

"Yes, my darling, certainly you did", said her mother who

was very fond of her youngest daughter, the only one who was unmarried.

We were much tired and so we retired to our hole. We crept into our beds and were soon asleep.

I woke up early in the morning. It was a spring morning and a blue sky was hanging overhead, and the incense-bearing air dropped from the very sky as it were. I tried to sit up, but hurt my head against a bed-post. While reading I had slipped down my chair and had crept under my bed. My body was aching with lying in an uncomfortable position. The electric bulb was waxing pale in the increasing daylight. The scattered remains of a leg or a wing of a beetle or a moth bore testimony to the game we were engaged upon at night.

Miss Liz too had got up early and was looking scornfully at me from her hole in the ceiling. She wagged her tail as if to say I was a fool to leave such beautiful beetles and grass-hoppers and to take to reading dull books.

"Good morning, Liz", said I, half jocularly as I reviewed my dream. And though the family has gone to hibernate during the winter, it will return to help its bibliomaniac friend when he is again inclined to read on summer evenings.

ONE ANNA BIT

by SHUSHIL KUMAR BANERJEE

The show is over.
Under the bright lustre of the cinema house—
A Panorama of well-fed, well-dressed, and majestic men and women.
A winding flux of people amidst the horns of cars and cries of cabs.
They go on blowing rings of smoke from their "don't care" lips;
Their cars dash on, flashing shafts of light on the joyous road.
Colour! Light! Music!
An air of ceremonial gaiety, retrospective of a sweet evening;
An extravagance of mirth, a superfluity of joy, a pride of wastage, bubbling like the foamy flood on a wine cup.
A scene of a deluded gathering, set dreamy and randomly romantic.
A young couple: a charming pair.
The youth—
in a loose silken *korta* with enameled face cleanly shaved and varnished hair; a sample of a 'polished' gent.

The girl—
in a green *sari*, with pencilled eye, red lips, rose-tinted cheeks,
Sweet fragrance, and swinging ear-rings, glittered like a wavelet in the ocean of beauty.
A lively representation of two 'hall-marked-ware' of modern aristocrats.
A bright and homely 'two-seater'; the Two are within and on point of start.
When suddenly stood before them a figure,
unfed and lean, uncovered and thin—
like a ghost, a curse incarnate of the age.
The vitality of the world was nil in his dim and hollow eyes;
with a shadow of a life-long failure in the eyes, he stared at the jolly world—
A picture of dirt and penury, a reflexion of the ill-fate of ages.
He stretched his ugly and bony hands, palms joined,
with a practised posture of a pauper in his body.
The youth, with a face, wry and full of hate,
signed him to be off at once—
But the girl
opened her purse, fat and shiny,
and threw from a safe distance on his shameful palm
a one anna bit.
Her polished nails blushed and shimmered in the light of the cinema house.
The one anna piece!
I saw in it the history of hated humanity;
the capital of civilised pickpockets.
It bears the stamp of sanctioned exploitations;
the uncared and insulting compensation,
the gift of debased kindness,
to the man-made indigence of this earth.
I saw in it the unaccounted sum of humanity's loss.
"To the famished, pale with penury", the microphone screamed in a pæen.
"My frenzied rhythm will bring conclusion.
They will beat their brows,
And one by one in terror, in rage, and in tears
Will affirm the triumph of the acknowledged".
And I remembered the memorable lines of a great man:
"All unused tenderness of man's instincts at one pole and at the other are economic relations reduced to bare coercive

rights to commodities. They must return in on each other and fuse in a new synthesis".

THE HUNGRY WOMAN

by Biswanath Dey, B.COM.

There goes
The Hungry Woman
Along the city street,
Able not to carry herself,
Yet, a baby
Has she got.
Now she rises,
And now she sinks,
Yet goes she on
A handful of rice
To get.
After many a door to door
She had begged,
A handful of rice she got.
But, Alas !
That also dropped
Off her torn veil.
The babe to care
Or the rice to pick,
Can't she decide.
And,
At last
The babe she lays
On the road,
And to pick the rice
She turns.
'Angel' like 'Car'
Comes at once,
To free her
Of her pains.
None it looks at
And cares it none
But proudly
Goes it on.
And when it's gone,
A moment's cry
Was heard
On the Earth's heart.

And later on
It was seen
'Nothing !'
But the poor beggar babe
Has been crushed.
All its
Pains and sorrows of life
Have ceased to be.
Alone,
The poor mother
Is left
On this Earth's breast.
And,
She reflects
That on the road
The rice lay
And
The moment
To pick the rice
She turns,
Caring little for her loss.
Wondered
Become the passerby :
"What kind of
Mother is she
That does not
Weep for son ;
And to her
Dearer is rice !"

SONNET

STRIKE O LORD

by P. G. NARAYANA, M.A.

Strike, O lord ! the lyre of life again
In Thine own land now sunk so feebly low
And rouse the warrior clans with strains amain
To fight anew the savage treacherous foe.
The field, alas ! where shone bright Gita's light
A camp has turned, not with embattled men,
But kith and kin reduced to hapless flight
From bigotry's black blight-infested fen.
Fallen are we with sundry selfish aims,
And red pride stalks in virtue's shuffling train,

Assails the ear with spirit's lofty claims
And dopes the mind with weak'ning slogans vain.
Wake from Thy sleep, and in the world's dazed ken
Lead us to glory's golden shrine : but when ?

IF I WERE A MODERN GIRL

by N. G. Gupta (Junior Commerce)

All of us build castles in the air. Our life is so drab and full of cankering cares that dreaming appears to be the only relief. Dreaming is not hurtful, but it should not make us actionless. I often indulge in pleasant dreams. They give me comfort and consolation. My favourite dream is to become a 'Modern Girl'. It is a phrase common to people in all ages. The old ladies of today must have been 'Modern Girls' at one time of their life. People above forty use this expression, and they mean thereby the girl who is unlike them in dress, thought and behaviour. With all this 'a modern girl' has a meaning peculiar to her.

If I were a 'Modern Girl' I wonder what I shall do. I shall be not this or that modern girl, but I know what I will be. I will put on a stylish dress and move about as fearlessly as boys do. I will like to care for my appearance, unlike my old mother or sister. I will go to school or college and pass my degree examination with equal ease with boys. I will no longer be a timid innocent soul and a 'picture of modesty'. I will ride a cycle or drive a car. I may have no objection to smoking a cigarette if pressed to, but I will not smoke one. I will play the role of any character in a mixed drama, and will have no hesitation to act on the stage or in a film. Entering 'cafes' to drink coffee or tea will not trouble my mind. My marriage will not depend on my parents. I would like to choose a partner for myself and marry him in spite of the objections raised by parents. To remain unmarried is a national loss and therefore marry I must.

I will be a free-lance in thought. Like many a modern girl, I will take to a career. I will be prepared to shoulder life's responsibilities with equal courage like man. Either I will be a writer, a pilot, a doctor, or a pleader. I will know the values of life well, and will have no illusions about it. I will be ambitious not to look a member of the weaker sex, and I hope I will be successful in this. Being a modern girl I will be looked upon suspiciously for the rapid progress shown almost in every phase of life. People will be alarmed at my

activities and will feel honestly that some evil may come out of them. As a matter of fact this alarm is groundless. The evils arising out of modern tendencies will be less harmful than those arising out of illiteracy in which women are steeped even today. Hence there is nothing much alarming in a modern girl and I will not be looked upon with suspicion.

This dream makes me happy. I know you will ridicule me for this reverie but pleasure lies in self-deception. I realise that if wishes were horses, beggars would ride, and know that wishes can never be horses and beggars will never ride them. With all this my wishing enriches me, and gives me untold pleasure. How I wish I never came out of this dream-world!!

A SHORT STORY

by INDU SCHROFF

Saroj, daughter of Rai Bahadur Motilal, was a very simple girl of fifteen. Although she belonged to a rich and respectable family she was neither arrogant nor haughty in behaviour. She had not seen the world. Being the only child of her parents she never knew what suffering meant. Her only game was playing with dolls. She used to make dresses for dolls and arrange wedding parties with dolls. But her innocent heart admitted Manoj in its sanctuary of pure and child-like love. Sometimes, with child-like purity, he used to ask Saroj whom she would marry. Saroj would innocently say, "I shall marry you. We shall make a doll's house. Won't you buy my dolls?" Manoj used to get very much delighted. "Yes, Saroj. Why not?" he would say. Saroj used to dream of Manoj and her dolls and Manoj used to dream of Saroj.

Saroj had a friend, Shashi. She was a very wicked girl. She was crooked and spiteful. Her only ambition was to put others in difficulty. She was a coquette, and knew how to attract people by her charms. People were surprised to see Saroj in her company.

Once Saroj made a beautiful black silk handkerchief and embroidered her name on it with white silver stars. Shashi liked it very much and so without the permission of Saroj, she pinned it on her sari.

A month after the incident, while Saroj was playing with her dolls one day, her father came to her room. He showed the handkerchief and said, "If you desired to get married, you

should have told me. Why did you give that handkerchief to Hari?"

Saroj was astonished to hear this. For a moment she was stupefied, and stared at her father with eyes wide open. "Daddy, why should I give anything to Hari?"

"Keep quiet. Don't you feel ashamed of your action? How could Hari get this handkerchief if you did not give it to him. Do you want to get married to that poor fellow? Oh, you have shattered my dreams. But I will not allow this to go on. You shall marry a rich man of noble blood, and not a beggar."

Saroj faltered and in a voice that expressed the greatest resentment she said, "Shashi took it away from me". Angered and affronted by this reply, Rai Bahadur Motilal snatched a marble statue that was decorating a corner of his luxurious drawing room, and hurled it upon his daughter. Saroj swiftly escaped and the marble fell on the floor with a crash. She was frightened and began to cry. As a result she was locked in a room, and was not even served with food. Poor Saroj did not know what to do.

Next day she got up and found that she was still locked. Sometimes she thought of going to Hari, and in the name of manly honour challenge him to deny that the handkerchief was given to him by her. Poor girl! She did not know the ways of this wicked world. Many times she made up her mind, but gave up the idea. For a long time she suffered on account of conflicting emotions. In the end she decided to go, so she opened the unbarred window, and jumped out.

Saroj went to Hari and, folding her hands, said very humbly, "Hari, I have always seen you as a brother. I am sure you will help me. Please tell my father that you got the hanky through Shashi". Hari said, "Saroj, I had been loving you. Often I thought of opening my heart to you, but you always ignored me. So when I did not succeed that way, I had to take this step. Now you have to become my wife."

Saroj, poor Saroj, went to her house. She fell on her bed. Her head was reeling with sorrow and disillusionment. She was so much disappointed that she thought of taking poison. But the spectre of death horrified her. "Oh, if I shall die, what would happen to my dolls?" She was busy in some deep thought. Suddenly she heard music. When she opened the window she saw a beggar singing, "Truth wins the game, don't get disappointed."

Again Saroj went back to her bed. The song appeared to have given her moral strength. Suddenly the door was

opened and her mother entered the room. She told Saroj that her father had accepted Hari's offer and that she was going to be married to him in a fortnight. Saroj started crying and said, "I don't want to marry him. Please, mummy, save me". But her mother did not pay any heed to her.

Saroj's mother was doing all the needful things for her marriage. On the other hand, Saroj was passing her days crying. On the day of her marriage she decided to commit suicide. She thought of drowning herself in the river. On the way to the river she saw Manoj coming. She stopped for a while. Manoj congratulated her and gave a photograph as a wedding present. He said, "Now you are going to be Hari's wife and so I must return that photo". As Saroj saw the photo she trembled with joy and said, "Manoj, you have saved me. Come, run with me to my house".

Manoj ran with Saroj although he was under the impression that she had gone mad.

"Daddy, look at this photo. Can you see Shashi standing with me and that hanky pinned on Shashi's sari? Do you still believe Shashi's statement that I gave this hanky to Hari in her presence? Daddy, do you now think that I am innocent?

As she uttered these words, a violent convulsion shook her, and she fell down on the sofa. A moment or two later, when she regained consciousness, she saw her father kneeling by her side with tears in his old eyes. "My dear good girl, I am very sorry. . . ."

Two weeks later, Rai Bahadur Motilal was entertaining the distinguished men and women of the town to a sumptuous feast to celebrate his daughter's wedding with Manoj.

VIDHWA

by B. L. Purohit

Beenu was nearing fourteen when her parents talked of her marriage. A sweet girl of amiable disposition, she was loved by all who knew her.

She was really at a loss to understand why her mother was so anxious to marry her. She was quite happy in the little home where she was born and the proposal of marriage irritated her. Why should she be separated from her own home and be asked to live with somebody whom she did not know? And yet the idea was somewhat novel in itself and had a magical effect on her mind sometimes. She would have a decent home

to live in and a nice husband who would look after her and try to please her in every possible way. She would be respected in the family by her youngers and be loved by elders. Above all she would be a *Rani.* This word she had often heard being used for brides and she also thought of the day when others would call her *Rani.* She was fascinated by this vista of thoughts and she felt after all marriage was not so bad a thing. Alas, poor girl! She did not know what the future had in store for her.

* * * *

Ganpat could have spent all his money for a bride. His wife had been dead only a few years leaving behind two sons and a daughter. He was already past fifty and any reasonable man of his age would not have entertained the idea of matrimony again. But Ganpat was one of those who cared more for this world's enjoyments. After all, what was he to do with all his hoarded wealth? He had made his pile in *satta* and giving away a good part of it in charity and leaving the rest to his sons and daughter was no consolation to him. Surely he would not come back from the heavens to see that all this was well spent.

Shanker, Beenu's father, owed a good amount of money to Ganpat. This he had taken on loan at various times and the excessive rate of interest made it impossible for him to repay it.

Ganpat was constantly pressing for payment and one day threatened legal steps against Shanker. This meant Shanker's losing practically all he possessed. The idea stunned him.

Ganpat one day called Shanker and told him that he quite realised the difficulty which the latter's indebtedness represented, but there was a way out of it. This was welcome news to Shanker. But when he was told that this meant giving his daughter in marriage to Ganpat, he felt hesitant for a moment. The alternative was solvency at the cost of his daughter's happiness, or utter ruin. He preferred the former.

When Beenu came to know about it, she was in a rage. But alas, girls have no say in our society in the matter of marriage. Her repeated protests bore no effect on the decision of her parents.

* * * *

One "auspicious" evening, as the pandits put it, she was married to Ganpat.

Days and months passed by and Ganpat thought he had everything he desired in this world. But this happiness was short-lived.

Unfortunately for Beenu, one day he caught cold and then had an attack of pneumonia. Thirteen days and nights Beenu attended her husband always praying God for his recovery. But God willed it otherwise.

* * * *

Friends and relatives for some days talked of Ganpat. Some praised him, others criticised. The sun rose and set in the sky as before, and there was a swing back to "business as usual" down below. Things took their wonted course as if nothing unusual had happened.

It is easy to imagine the condition of Beenu after her husband's death. She was all alone. She suffered agony in silence and cursed society as it had not cared to raise a finger against her marriage with a man so far advanced in years. She was a burden now even in her own home. A forlorn and neglected widow she was, and nobody cared to sympathise with her.

The event was a commonplace of present-day Hindu society, and some would even criticise it as a poor ending to a story. But facts are facts, and even at the risk of spoiling fiction attention had to be drawn to the commonplace as giving rise to the question : Who was really responsible for the misery which the girl's life came now to be ?

O, BELOVED, GIVE ME MY PEN

by SULTAN SINGH "PREM"

O, beloved, give me my pen.

Lo, the sun has peeped through the curtains of Night ; birds are singing in their nests and flowers, smiling in the garden ; methinks they are saying—"Come, come, enjoy this sweet life with us". See, the petals of the rose-bud pouting their ruby lips in dumb music. They are weaving a golden net of happiness around my soul ; before the trance is over, I must entwine it in my song.

O, beloved, give me my pen.

Lo, the twilight gathers around me. The crimson

rays of the setting sun, reflected on the watery bosom of the canal with a sparkle and splash of colours, have created a silent nook of cloistered seclusion for me. The skirts of a fleeting cloud have caught the parting kiss of the dying sun in a rosy blush. A pair of doves homing athwart the heavens have cut through the parting lips of the clouds.

On the distant sands a caravan slowly passes by. The weary cattle move on. The voice of prayer from the temple comes to me, like incense trailing upwards before the idol. With the whole world, my soul is lost in breathless adoration. I must count my rosary in my song.

O, beloved, give me my pen.

Lo, under the canopy of the silent sky, decked with myriads of twinkling stars, I muse on the fate of Man. The watchman of the night, inside the haunts of men, beguiles his weary hours with snatches of songs, whose melody travels through the darkness from afar and reaches my ear.

A few points of light at a distance speak of fireside joys and sorrows to me. A distant moan in the wilderness calls up the memory of a star-crossed lover, shedding his tears in silent misery. I must dip my song in his sorrow.

O, beloved, give me my pen.

Before the night is over I must also seek solitude and solace for my aching heart and run to my favourite spot among the sand dunes. This world with its sorrows and trials holds no hope for me. Friends ignore me, people laugh and mock at me, and call me a dreamer and fool ; I reck not that.

I must go where Love beckons me, to whose altar I must dedicate both my pen and song.

TO MY COLLEGE

by LILA DHAR JOSHI—2YR. (COM.)

O temple of learning! Your perseverance in imparting knowledge and your determination to improve human culture is so dogged that no power on earth can shake you. Mighty convulsions that rock the nations leave no impress on you. Nature tries her force, is defeated and marvels at your firmness.

Rain comes with rolling clouds and deafening thunder. Heavy drops batter in vain against your roofs. Torrential downpour and challenging thunder find you firm. Nothing can move you from your purpose.

Winter comes with its biting cold. No creature dare come out of its hiding place at dead of night when bitter winter

winds blow. The universe shivers and becomes 'infirm of purpose', but do you? Winter admits defeat before you and moves on.

Then comes the scorching desert summer. The very air seems to be on fire. At noon when the sun is at the zenith, cattle dare not move out of the shallow ponds, birds hide themselves in bushes and human beings in cool rooms with closed casements. But the sun darts its fiery arrows in vain on you. After hours of ceaseless assaults, the sun bows to you, and glides away abashed to return reinforced. You are a mighty abode of learning, an unflinching reformer of human culture.

Man himself tries to disturb your dignified calm. Every year in July students come from every part of the country—from the sultry sands of Rajputana and the rich fertile plains of the Doab ; from the cool snow-clad mountains of the North and the banks of the Cauvery. And they come from the hardy mountainous regions of Maharashtra and the rich paddy fields of Bengal and from the five rivers. They shout and raise the devil. But all this leaves you undisturbed. They do their lessons, get their degrees and return home.

And fair daughters of Eve in red, blue, and snow-white *saris* come to you; with their smiling faces and side-long looks. They try to disturb your studied calm.They laugh and talk in dulcet tones; their sonorous voices ring in your ears. But all this leaves you cold. The baffled maidens are abashed and puzzled. They too take their lessons and leave you to yourself.

For years now the old College Chaprasi, undaunted by your triumph over the forces of nature and man, has been trying to disturb you by ringing the bell repeatedly during the day. But day succeeds day like monster devouring monster in a dream, the noises about you rise and die out, the boys shout, the girls smile and laugh, and the bells ring and ring, and yet you stand firm as a rock, devoted to your great aim.

I also bow before you, O house of learning! You are an embodiment of perseverance and eternal peace. I salute you once again.

THE HOSTEL THAT FOUND ITSELF

THE "morale", "tone", or "spirit", of a British public school "house", an American college "fraternity", or an Indian "hostel", is a recurring topic among schoolmasters and students alike. One of the main objects of the British "house" system (as of the regimental system of the British and Indian armies) is to inculcate the team spirit; ideals of comradeship and corporate loyalty; but since a house is a collection of individuals—teachers and students in process of entering, teaching, or studying, their longer or shorter allotted periods, and then leaving—its composition is always changing, and it follows that, as the quality of teachers and taught cannot but vary, so must its morale.

Which does not mean that a judicious Principal can do nothing to raise the morale of the agglomeration of teachers and students that chances to be on his hands at any given moment. For example:

The New Hostel of the Birla College began its life as a place of overflow accommodation into which what were described to me as "mixed elements" had been directed. In 1951, the New Hostel was still new and without traditions, and its spirit could best be called indifferent. It was, however, fortunate in its Warden, Professor H. C. Batra, whose interest in all aspects of education, and whose warm and enthusiastic temperament, make him a natural ally and leader of boys. "A little understanding, a blind eye to a little nonsense". he says. "Then they'll come to you and ask you things, and with a bit of a push and a shove, you can help them to avoid mistakes, although, of course", he adds with a twinkle, "you need a big stick sometimes."

Concerned by the atmosphere of his hostel, Professor Batra was reflecting over ways and means of improvement, when he found what he wanted in the fair arranged by the Birla College's oldest hostel, the Rajasthan, whose students pride themselves on belonging to the "cock house". The Warden of the Rajasthan Hostel, energetic Professor B. V. Ratnam, had inspired, and taken the lead in organising, a fair to celebrate its twentieth anniversary. There had been merry-go-rounds, sales of work, vegetables, and chutneys, a series of hilarious impromptu debates open to all comers who were invited to speak on the advantage of having (1) a beard, (2) one leg, (3) one eye, and other subjects equally conducive to displays of wit by those who had it and of facetiousness by



18 "We like it here!" A Birla College student, taken at hostel fair See page 95

19 Returning from class Birla hostels to left Note rural surroundings

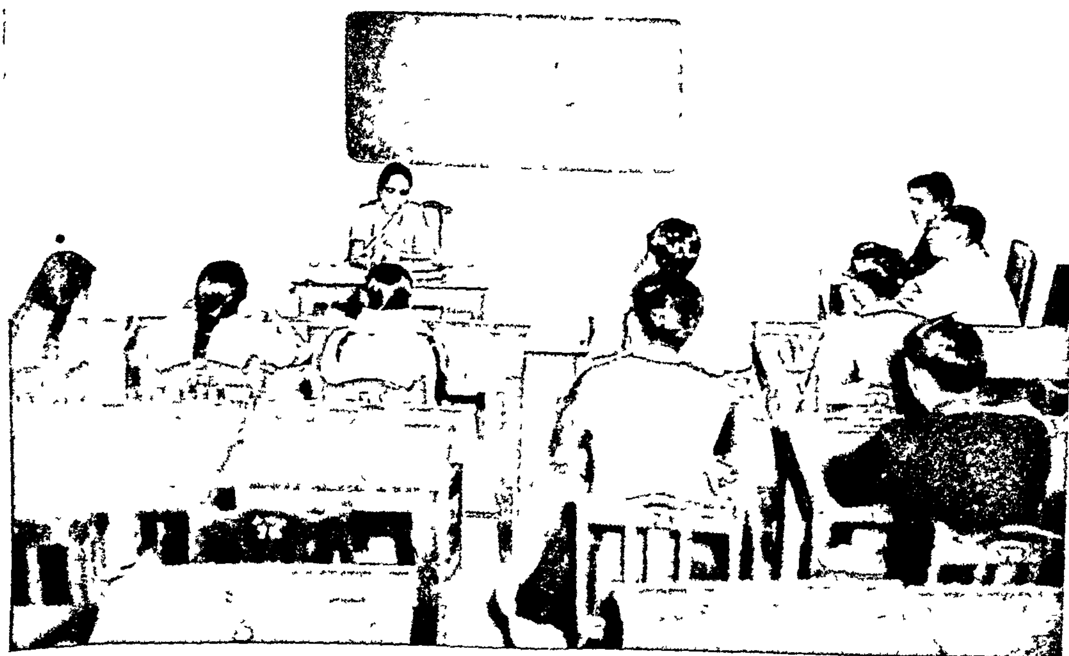


20 New Hostel, Birla College See page 94

21 Leisure time music class at the Birla College, free to all comers from all institutions



22. Co-education in Birla College



23 Co-education at the Birla College. A woman teacher takes 6 boys and 3 girls

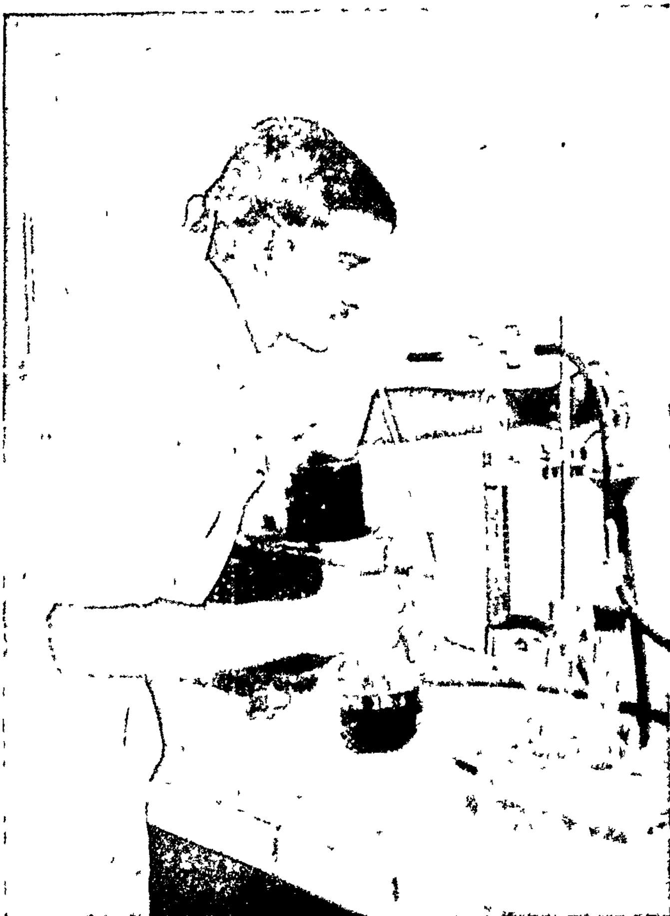
24. Birla College : Pharmacy students

25. Birla College : Bacteriological research



26 Birla College : Centrifugal separator

27 Birla College : Physics



28. Birla College . Chemistry



29 Birla College sugar coating pills—"an occupation for the metaphorically minded". See page 73

those who hadn't; and so on to a grand finale, a play and a concert held in the entertainment hall above the old Pilani library. One or two people were unkind enough to insinuate that the Rajasthan Hostel fair had interfered with studies by taking up more time than was justified, but Professor Batra of the New Hostel was not among them.

He said to his boys: "How about doing something like that ourselves?"

The idea was at first received doubtfully. Everyone had looked down so much and so often on the New Hostellers that they had come to agree with the general verdict that they were a "hopeless crowd". In any case, to compete with the outstanding success of the Rajasthan boys' fair was, they feared, a challenge beyond their powers ; they were defeated before the start. Most thought that for their first venture in a corporate undertaking something less ambitious was required. But Professor Batra first talked them into a fair and then fired them with his own enthusiasm.

I was invited to be one of the panel of judges to select the three best stalls. We were to visit the fair daily for three days to note improvement or deterioration of effort, taking into account everything from shop displays to sales' manners and cleanliness.

In company with Pandeji and other judges, I approached the roped-off square at the rear of the New Hostel, and marvelled at the humped backs of at least 50 booths facing inwards upon the ground that we were about to enter. Diagonals of blue ribbon were stretched across the way in, and the senior member of the Committee of Hostel students responsible for organising the fair gave Pandeji a pair of scissors. To the sound of polite hand-clapping, Pandeji cut the ribbon and we followed him in. All the booths had been improvised by the students out of tables, screens, and on-the-spot carpentry. Innumerable bedspreads and curtains, hung up as partitions, turned the whole scene into a patchwork of half a hundred colours, cheerful by day, and gay when lit up at night. The students had themselves wired the booths for electricity.

A score of gramophones and radios now burst forth in a raucous jumble of Indian songs and dance music. As I looked about, I felt that the Hostellers deserved careful and kindly consideration for the size and complexity of their effort.

Professor Batra was cruising ceaselessly around the four points of the fair's compass, like an anxious destroyer with a large convoy trebly vulnerable because stationary.

Before we had time to decide where to go, we were kidnapped by the owners of the tea shop nearest the fair entrance. Three tables, large, medium, and small, took up most of the space. They were covered by multi-coloured cloths, one of which had undoubtedly been ripped off someone's bed. Two plants on one table and a wall calendar offered meagre decoration.

As we seated ourselves, the noise of a Primus stove in full hiss, and a clatter of tea cups behind a screen of hessians, created a hospitable atmosphere. Two students emerged round the corner of the screen, each telling the other what he ought to be doing and how. Then they saw us and were stricken shyly dumb. In quick succession, tea and cakes were placed before us, the screen fell down revealing the sort of curious assembly of apparently unassociated objects that puzzle you in the flies of a theatre, and the Primus stove caught fire. The ensuing stampede in the kitchen bulged, now here, now there, through the hessians and nearly into Pandeji's lap, who (perhaps because he thought them to be avoided before an outsider like me) took an unsympathetic view of these methods of attracting the judges' attention, reminding me of Queen Victoria's failure to be amused.

I maintained a flow of polite conversation...Professor Batra's anxious face peered in at us for a second...the fallen screen was restored...and after some minutes the Primus had evidently cooled down sufficiently to be handled, for its penetrating hiss reached us once more.

A large black mother pie-dog crept in from under the outside screen and stood about in dubious hopes of a piece of cake. I shared mine with her before she was shooed away to disappear under the nearest screen whose internal smells proclaimed food. Later, I chanced upon her outside as, with disciplinary snap and nip, she was keeping her four black puppies in order. They yelped and did what they were told, huddling in a little group—four wistful balls of black—while she went off foraging again.

We paid for our tea and came out into the commotion of the fair which seemed able to adjust the volume of its canned cacophony to the rapidly increasing number of visitors. One ingenious booth proprietor was endeavouring to attract custom by a constantly tooting horn of the ruthless lorry-driver's type. The silent East? The footfalls of India's millions in the powdered dust and the meditations of the mahatmas are among the few silent phenomena of a sub-continent that seems wholly

unconscious of noise, loud or deafening, sudden or continuous at midday or midnight. Pause a moment, and listen to an Indian town: motor horns; cars minus their exhaust boxes; gargantuan radio loud-speakers; gramophones with needles worn to gargling, bubbling stubs; policemen shouting, policemen blowing whistles; motor horns; vendors of keys, gram, ice cream, vegetables, bananas, apples—all calling their wares; trams jolting and jangling; temple bells clanging at dusk, dawn, the middle of the night, or just any time; motor horns; fireworks exploding, rocketing, ricocheting; everyone always shouting to make himself heard; voices singing; motor horns blowing vigorously at a solitary pedestrian in an empty street; and a dozen other noises, unidentifiable but *noisy*. Even in the countryside: listen to half a dozen kerosene-driven pumps going, each with a home-made whistle put together out of a tin fixed to the exhaust, each uttering its own little toot, bleat, or shriek (to keep evil spirits away I'm told), all six in raggedly different rhythms and notes.

Once in Paris, when Jean-Charles Legrand, the French criminal lawyer, was dining with us, we talked of murder, and he said: "If I were an Examining Magistrate and a man confessed to killing for money, jealousy, or revenge, I'd be bound to admit there was a case to go before the jury. But if he confessed that he killed a man for splitting his ears with hideous noise—horns, radios, anything you like—I'd say 'justifiable homicide', and give him something out of the poor box *pour encourager les autres*".

But, of course, noise in a fair is legitimate, and the shouts of student "barkers", the screams of children, and the *brouhaha* of talk and merriment, mingled with the blare of the loud-speakers.

I was half invited, half hustled, into another tea shop called *The Four Friends*. As I shot under the entrance arch, I glimpsed a nicely designed bill of fare hanging up. This tea shop contrasted favourably with that which I had just left; like all the others, it was constructed of hessians, carpets, or bedspreads, hung over roughly carpentered frames, but the four friends had taken pains to cheer it up. Photographs, and coloured prints cut from magazines, had been hung with an eye for design on the walls. There were potted plants, a radio, and a large vase of flowers. The tea tables were well arranged; the cloths clean. To one side was a stall of Indian sweets laid out on shelves that looked scrubbed and appetising.

Their sign of *The Four Friends* was elaborately cut of cardboard and, lit from within, shone forth bold and gay when darkness came. Neighbouring tea shops had sacrificed comfort in order to cram in as many tables as possible; others had food lying exposed to the flies. Had I been the sole judge, the four friends would have got a prize.

Outside the door of one tea shop, a *dhoti*-clad *pan-wallah* sat cross-legged, calling his wares. He offered to make up his *pan* in accordance with the taste of any state in India. A big old-fashioned framed mirror, a chair standing ready for the gossiper, and a bright uncovered lamp shining on packets of cheap cigarettes, half-open match boxes, and some pice to attract custom, were all characteristic.

A large food shop, notable for the display of its wares, and for the good manners and smiling welcome of its owners, was a near prizewinner, but unfortunately I felt compelled to knock marks off when I saw some cups drying, bottoms up, in the dust, and an unprotected tray of cakes placed near the entrance absorbing all the dust thrown up by the feet of the passing crowds.

The realistic Pathan costumes worn by the owners of a fruit barrow in the centre of the compound, and the high nasal tones (evidently considered characteristic) in which they sang their wares, attracted a stream of admiring idlers.

The lucky dip booths were popular. Some had spinning cardboard rings of film stars with lurid poster complexions and costumes, who won you the bank if they stopped beside the right number, or more often lost it for you when they didn't. Others had bottles that you tried to catch with rings attached to fishing rods.

I came across a gleaming new cycle, a good-looking radio, and camera—prizes in a lottery for which you were urged to buy tickets. How beautiful were the fine old weaves in black and white, and blue and white, of the bedspreads covering the screens of this booth! Intricate geometric designs linked and developed in lovely rhythm—easily obtainable when I first came to India, now rare, for the mills have largely defeated the village craftsman.

Chand, the fortune teller was a friend of our's. He was silent, shortsighted, melancholy, and sweet-tempered, and used to swop stamps with Armyn. Now here he was almost hidden by a huddle of backs, all bending over each other to listen in to the fortune that he was telling—nothing drastic, for our friend was too kind to upset his clients. I still hear

his quiet voice warning of just a *little* jealousy, or perhaps a *tiny* quarrel, that would make life a *trifle* difficult for a *wee* while. And although the object of the fair was to raise money, he could not bring himself to charge anything. People criticised Chand because he had not provided a dark cubby hole into which his clients could retire to learn their fate in decent privacy; but our friend's public proceedings, by enabling all and sundry to join in with flippant comment, ironic groan, or cheer, added to the fun of the fair.

A casual visitor from Britain or America would have passed by the student shoe-black who did a big trade, shoe following shoe as quick as he could polish them, without giving him a thought. But surely it was a sign of the times, at least as exemplified in Pilani, to see a caste Hindu touching and polishing shoes—made of cow hide.

For three days the judges perambulated the fair, filling note books with marks awarded and subtracted. Dirty cups had to be weighed against artistic effects, bad service manners against well-arranged merchandise, and so on. At last we retired with our note books to confer in Professor Batra's sitting room.

The results were announced over the microphone by the Professor to a dense crowd of brightly lit and excited faces.

The first prize went to a *panwallah* under protest from Miss Gidwani, who said that my *wallah* described above, who knew the different kinds of *pan* from all over India, was much more characteristic. She had no use for the prizewinner, a showy fellow with electric lights in his shop, and sweets (*sweets* sold by a *panwallah*!): all bogus.

The second prize went to a photographer's studio, which offered photographs of Pilani's activities and personalities, and was complete with camera and equipment to take your portrait: three prints for Rs. 1/8.

The third prize was won by two shy students who ran a book-stall.

In awarding the prizes, Professor Batra delivered himself of a rousing homily.

"Boys!" he said. "The good name of the New Hostel has been established. Never again can anyone call you 'hopeless'. You have worked together, and organised yourselves and this fair splendidly. I'm proud of the way you tackled and solved all the complex problems involved in getting up a show like this. You have played out a part of real life and learnt a lot of practical things of great use to

you. I want you all to know that I rejoice personally in your success. I'm proud of you all."

Everybody clapped and cheered and the three-day party was over, but everybody was too happy and excited to think of going home, and newcomers—including a crowd of wondering and slightly bewildered village men and women—continued to drift in. One by one the loud-speakers picked up their music again; children ran hither and thither playing 'tig' and hide-and-seek, and everyone talked at once and went over the events of the past three days and told each other how they would, could, or should, really have won a prize, if it hadn't been for this or that bit of bad luck, or if the judges hadn't come from a different part of the country from the speakers and therefore naturally been prejudiced against them. Stallholders counted their takings, collected unsold merchandise, and began packing up. And even now our kind and efficient Fair Master, M. B. Khosla (3rd year, Science) had not exhausted his patience and courteousness, listening carefully to all enquiries and complaints, and finding the right answer for everyone. He deserved a prize to himself.

Just as I was leaving, I heard Professor Batra break it to the New Hostellers that they would have to pay Rs. 3/- each for the electricity consumed at the fair.

"Why?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"In preparation for life", the Professor said earnestly. "You must learn now to pay your taxes."

There followed some seconds of "a silence you most could hear", shattered by everyone speaking at once. Opinion was unanimous that while the payment of taxes might be admirable in principle, it was a bit too thick in practice. I am sure that there is a moral in this somewhere.

LODHI: THE PUNJABI NEW YEAR

IN the Punjab, the New Year is celebrated with bonfires, entertainments, and special sweets flavoured with *rebri*, and at Pilani the Punjabi students of the Birla and the Engineering Colleges give New Year's jollifications to which they invite their friends. The College Principals help towards the cost of fuel, while the students themselves raise the money to provide the bags of sweets which go the rounds.

Armyn, Aminta, and I were fortunate enough to be invited to the parties given by both Colleges in January, 1952.

The night air was chilly and reminded me of the winter nights, crisp and star-studded, that I had known years ago in the Punjab when the crops stood high in the fields, magnificent wheat up to a man's armpits, and, on the roads, rank upon rank of huge bullock wagons, heaped with cotton, their drivers asleep on the top, creaked along to the annual market. We would sit out in front of the bungalow after dinner and listen to the gentle swish of the great canal—father of all this fertility—and I would hear which villages would be getting their water on the morrow, and the talk would not be of wine, women, and song, but of water, women, and cusecs. Also of the art of buffalo squatting, whereby, when your neighbour is not looking, you make your buffalo lie in his water channel and so divert his supply into your fields while he pays for it. As the irrigation "shop" went to and fro between the men hidden in the deep shadows of the faintly whispering trees, a country boat would loom up, drifting slowly downstream; then "Hero", the little pet fawn in my lap, would cock a cautious ear at the clangour of a sarus crane doing watchdog in the night.

It was dark when we reached the compound behind the New Hostel where the fair had been held. The space was now clear save for a great heap of five-foot logs, leant against each other as a battalion piles arms, so that the base was wide and the tips pointed to the sky at the apex—not at all like our Guy Fawkes bonfires in England which usually look like monstrous magpie nests. At a safe distance round the bonfire *dhurries* were stretched all over the ground on the side away from the hostel. Rows of chairs stood behind the *dhurries*. Across the corner made by the L of the hostel buildings, a stage, small but complete, with blue curtains and a proscenium of cloth tautly stretched upon a wooden frame,

had been erected. Footlights lit the base of the curtain and students were bustling this way and that, some burrowing in and out beneath the stage with electric wires and bulbs, others fixing a contrivance of pulleys and ropes for the curtain.

The black pie-dog and her four puppies upon whose home-run the revellers were encamped, sat under a nearby tree with the woebegone aloofness of a family whose back garden has once more been invaded by a horde of trippers, too over-all-ish to turn out. A powerful electric bulb helped the full yellow moon to lighten our darkness.

And now, through a gate, which forced them to emerge in ones and twos, came the Punjabi girls of the Vidyapeeth—about 30 of them. Their dark hair was brought forward over each shoulder in long plaits and they wore their national costume of baggy trousers narrowing to the ankle, and coloured silk *kurtas* down to their knees, under warm overcoats of Western pattern, to which, however. florid arrangements of braid and buttons gave characteristic Indian touches.

The Birla College boys, I divined rather than saw, were conscious of the presence of the Vidyapeeth girls, but social taboo prevented them from staring (although I caught covert glances), and they were not sophisticated enough to feel able to attempt friendly overtures with success. And, of course, had the mere idea that such an attempt might be made occurred to anyone, the girls would never have been allowed to attend the party. Continental Europeans from countries where marriages are still arranged by parents will understand and approve this strict separation of the sexes, but among Britons and Americans whose marriages are, of course, arranged in heaven, the absence of *camaraderie* between boys and girls never ceases to cause wonder and a little sadness for all the pleasant companionships that will never be made.

The girls and boys sat cross-legged on the *dhurries* in separate groups, while the grown-ups sat on the chairs behind.

I joined a group of professors and teachers, while Armyn and Aminta slipped away to join Ravi, Meena and Bitu Kaur, Avinash Batra, and other children, on the *dhurries* in front.

Principal and Mrs. Schroff and the Birla College staff stood chatting near the gate waiting for Pandeji. He arrived smiling and on time and was ushered to the microphone to open the proceedings with his usual forthright *bonhomie* and a joke or two in Hindi.

Thereafter, the sassenachs (if I may so call the non-

Punjabis present) became mere spectators and the Punjabis took over. Professor Batra made a speech which, judging by the laughter, must have been very funny. Then after a student had sung a Punjabi song, Mr. A. N. Johri, Professor of English, told one of his stories, which, I gather, have become a College institution. Some he takes from traditional sources, while of others he is himself the author. Tonight he gave us one of his own. Professor Johri has an easy way with a microphone and told his story with fluency and point. Like all good entertainers, he likes to work off a local or a topical allusion that gives his audience the chance to laugh at something familiar which audiences in every country in the world apparently enjoy more than anything else. So tonight he opened up by putting on a serious air and warning them in a mock pedantic, schoolmasterly sort of way that he had made up the story that he was going to tell in order to give them practice in the translation of English into Hindi. Part of the joke in the verses that he then recited was precisely that almost every line contained an English word that he had failed to translate, each of which was greeted by a roar of laughter. Although I did not understand much of what he said, I recognised that he was making much the kind of student jokes on learning a foreign language that Terence Rattigan cracked in his play *French Without Tears*.

Professor Johri's anecdote was in the tradition of Birbal and other oriental story-tellers who have entertained through the ages with stories about kings and their prime ministers, travellers and their asses, camels and their masters, who score points of wit or play on words. Here it is as Professor Johri wrote it out for me afterwards :

Ek din murgha ne murghi se kaha
Khāk men yon lot-ti hai bad-tamīz.
Boli murghi *powder* malti hun men
Janta yeh bhi nahin kya tu aziz.
Puchha murgha ne hai *powder* kya bala
Boli murghi hai yeh ek *fashion* ki-cheez.
Issse miltı hai bahut *beauty* ko *aid*
Husn ko deta hai yeh *life* kee *lease*.
Danta murghi : "*Idiot*, karta hai *tease*.
Tujh men hai *manners* ki behad kami
Men to hun tahzib-i-maghrib ke keniz.
Gar nahin sıkhega *etiquette* tau
Jaaongi *divorce* dekar bad-tamiz."

And here is a free translation :

One day the cock said to the hen : "Why do you roll in the dust, you indecent creature ?"

"Roll in the dust !" exclaimed the hen. "Can't you see I'm powdering my nose."

"What the devil is this powder ?" said the cock.

"An article of fashion," replied the hen. "An aid to beauty and a long lease of life."

"Don't speak English !" shouted the cock. (Yells of laughter,—reminding me of *French-Without-Tears*' Professor Maingot's *En francais, messieurs, en francais*).

"Idiot !" the hen retorted. "You have no manners, while I am the height of Western culture. If you won't learn etiquette, I'll start divorce proceedings."

Each line stirred ripples or roars from the students. The threat of divorce was a topical allusion to the fears professed by many Hindus that if the Hindu Code Bill, then under debate in the Federal Parliament, were passed, Indian women would, in their anxiety to be Western and up to date, divorce on the slightest pretext. The hen's nose-powdering and boasting of it as the height of fashion wowed the audience. It was in Pilani that it was really borne in on me that the Western woman's habit of bringing out her compact and powdering her nose at any time in any place is one of the biggest rib-ticklers against Western civilisation in India.

Then one of the little boys was invited to light the bonfire and bags of nuts and Punjabi sweets were passed round.

I like bonfires. To me, they evoke rites, primitive and eternal : the smell of resinous logs, smoke rising like incense, glowing reds, flickering, darting yellows, and grotesque shadows cast, as dancers—whether Polovtsian warriors or Breton peasants—chain and swing in circle, the men breaking ranks now and again to leap with wild cries over the flames—the vigorous movement and ruddy colours framed in the black and white depths of a snow-laden winter's night... My grandfather was an artist, and one of his most striking pictures was of just such a folk-scene of colour and Bacchanal—a *feu de joie* in Normandy.

Alas ! although the Punjabi bonfire crackled and blazed bravely enough, it paled into nothingness before the floodlights. I felt sad for it, as I feel sad when I see a lion humiliated by some boorishly exultant circus tamer.

But the Punjabis' rousing show, brimming with the high spirits of youth, chased away these sophisticated sentimentali-

ties of my middle age. There were sketches, jokes, and dancing; there were the Punjabi national costumes; there was the singing of Om Prakash Verma, a real musician, and the vitality and spontaneity of Bulwant Singh, in a lush, larger-than-life, Sikh *pagri*, who, terrified, but pretending to be a big-shot killer, had a knife-fight with M. B. Khosla, courtesy itself in real life but now on the stage one of the most villainous villains I ever saw; and the whole company were obviously having such fun that the audience laughed at the sheer joy of them, and went home to bed, still laughing.

THE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

THE Birla College Co-operative Society is amongst the Trust's oldest institutions, for, on the initiative of G. D. Birla's son, Laxmi Niwasji, it was organised in March, 1928, by Professor R. S. Yajnik, one of Pilani's veterans, who is still in charge of it.

The Co-operative Society deals in books, stationery and general merchandise, and is intended to meet the needs of the students and staff of all Pilani's institutions. Its object is not only to supply its members at wholesale rates but to encourage self-help and thrift, and to spread knowledge and understanding of the co-operative movement's possibilities. In a country like India in which isolated rural communities predominate, the possibilities of the co-operative movement are great. The number of co-operative societies has increased in the past thirty years, but there is room for infinitely vaster development of the idea, and by maintaining its own Society all these years, the Birla College has been doing its bit towards spreading the co-operative gospel.

The Society opened with a membership of 118, subscribing a paid up capital of Rs. 229/- in shares of Re 1/- each. To-day it has a membership of over 1,000 and members' share-money totals Rs. 8,642/-.

The Society was the first Co-operative Society to be launched in Jaipur state, and there was not even a state Act providing for the regulation of such societies. As the Pilani educational colony expanded, it outgrew the ability of local provision merchants to cope cheaply with their demands, and the next development in the Co-operative Society's history was the organisation of a provision store which would buy for its members in bulk supply.

There was no bank in Pilani when the college was raised

to degree status in 1943. The opportunity was therefore taken in that year to open a bank with the aid of the B.Com. students under Professor S. K. Porwal of the Commerce Department.

When the Engineering College was started in 1946, a system of common dining was introduced for the two colleges and a special organisation was set up to buy the stores for the catering department. Since there was no justification for running two provision stores, the provision side of the Co-operative Society was closed down. This was a severe, although temporary, setback to the Society, whose banking activities were then also closed for lack of suitable outlets to invest its surplus funds. But the ever-increasing numbers of students in all Pilani's institutions created new demands for numerous articles in daily use. Enterprising local inhabitants opened up shops in new Pilani and the Co-operative Society awoke to the fact that what others could do, it also could do, and more cheaply. Accordingly, in 1948, the general stores branch was opened to deal in hosiery, shoes, toilet requisites, medicines, sportsgoods, etc.

The students' bank has been revived under the name of Kuber Nidhi, after Kuber, the god of wealth. The bank is worked as a regular scheduled bank entirely by the efforts of the students and staff of the Birla College Commerce Department. In 1953, the bank had deposits totalling Rs. 30,000/-.

The Co-operative Society has been responsible for setting up a cinema committee, on which representatives of the Pilani institutions meet to select films and arrange for the regular weekly cinema show.

At first the Society used its profits to build up a reserve to help needy students and to pay a modest dividend to its members. But it was later proposed at a general meeting of the members that all profits that would have been paid out in dividends should be used to help students' welfare funds and deserving individual cases, and this has been done ever since.

CHAPTER VI

THE BIRLA HIGH SCHOOL

WE HAVE ALREADY seen in chapter IV how the little primary school founded by Seth Shivnarayan Birla in order that his grandsons, R. D. and G. D., might be taught to read, write and calculate, developed by stages into a High School, and we noted in chapter V how S. D. Pande arrived in 1929 to take charge of the Intermediate College. For the next fourteen years, the High School had no separate existence from the Intermediate College, of which it formed the junior part. But when in July, 1943, Sir Mirza Ismail authorised the degree classes for which permission had been sought in vain for so long, the buildings then used by the juniors were needed to accommodate the degree classes, and so the High School regained its separate existence in other quarters.

Pandit T. Muttoo, who had joined the High School as senior English teacher in December, 1928, when there were already 200 boys in the Upper Middle and High School classes, was appointed headmaster. He was still in charge when I arrived in Pilani in 1951, but he retired in the course of 1952, and was succeeded by Dr. G. S. Joshi.

Pandit Muttoo seemed to me an outstanding example of his generation of teachers, brought up under the old Indo-British dispensation. Merely to recite the places of his education, and the names of his teachers, is to conjure up memories of a vanished era of giants. He was born at Banaras on March 5, 1894, and attended the Primary School (now a degree college) founded by the Hindi poet and playwright, Bhartenda Harish Chandra. Thereafter, he went to the Central Hindu High School and College, founded at Banaras by Mrs. Annie Besant, one of the most remarkable personalities ever exported by Britain to India. Born in 1847, Annie Besant was associated successively with Charles Bradlaugh, the eccentric M.P. who propagated free thought and birth control to a horrified Victorian world; with the Socialist pioneer, Henry Hyndman, friend of Mazzini and Garibaldi; with Bernard Shaw, unique in his brilliance at being G.B.S.; and with Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founding mother of Theosophy. Mrs. Besant came to India in 1889, and identified herself with the struggle for independence to which she made two great contributions: (1) her widespread and effective political activities, and (2) the

foundation of the Central Hindu College, which was eventually to form the nucleus of Banaras University. She gathered round her a remarkable group of teachers who set high standards of conduct and learning before the boys of Muttoo's generation. Among his teachers were great names like G. S. Arundale, E. A. Wodehouse, P. K. Telang, M. B. Sanjiva Rao, and Dr. Bhagwan Das—all full of associations to those who know anything of the Indian story in the first quarter of this century. And, of course, Muttoo refers with respect and affection to "the fostering care and guidance" of Annie Besant herself.

Pandit Muttoo was no longer young when I met him, and he was frail from a recent illness, but his voice was resonant and decisive, and his mind alert and interested. A Kashmiri Brahmin, his features are aquiline. He and his four children have the auburn hair and startlingly pale parchment skins often found among the people of the hills of Northern India. Like all of his educational vintage, he speaks beautiful English, although he has never been to England, and when Lora asked him how he had acquired his 'Oxford accent' he replied with a smile: "From my teachers—you see, they were all Cambridge men."

The building that now houses the High School was once the Birla College; the same compound held the High School, the Library block with its big entertainment hall above, and two playgrounds, all enclosed behind tall railings which reminded me of those along Hyde Park on the Bayswater Road. From the street, you pass through a gate into a garden of small lawns and green plants. In July, 1950, the Birla College of Arts and Sciences moved to New Pilani, and in 1951 the High School moved into the spacious quarters thus left vacant. In their own old building, they have housed their school library. The great Birla Central Library, which used to be next door, moved into its new quarters in the main block at New Pilani on Christmas, 1951, and the space vacated has been allotted to a branch of the Montessori School for the benefit of Pilani residents. So the unceasing development goes on.

All classrooms in the new High School building have windows on each side overlooking the playgrounds, back and front, so that there is always a draught. In the High School library, I noticed two large paintings in oils by an old boy, Kirpal Singh, who has made a name for himself after a full training in Art. There is a large collection of



30. High School boys gardening



31 G S Joshı, Hıgh School Prıncipal, has had wide experience ın Europe and Indıa

32 High School boys being taught to handle tractor

33 On the High School farm



34. Vegetables grown by the High School boys



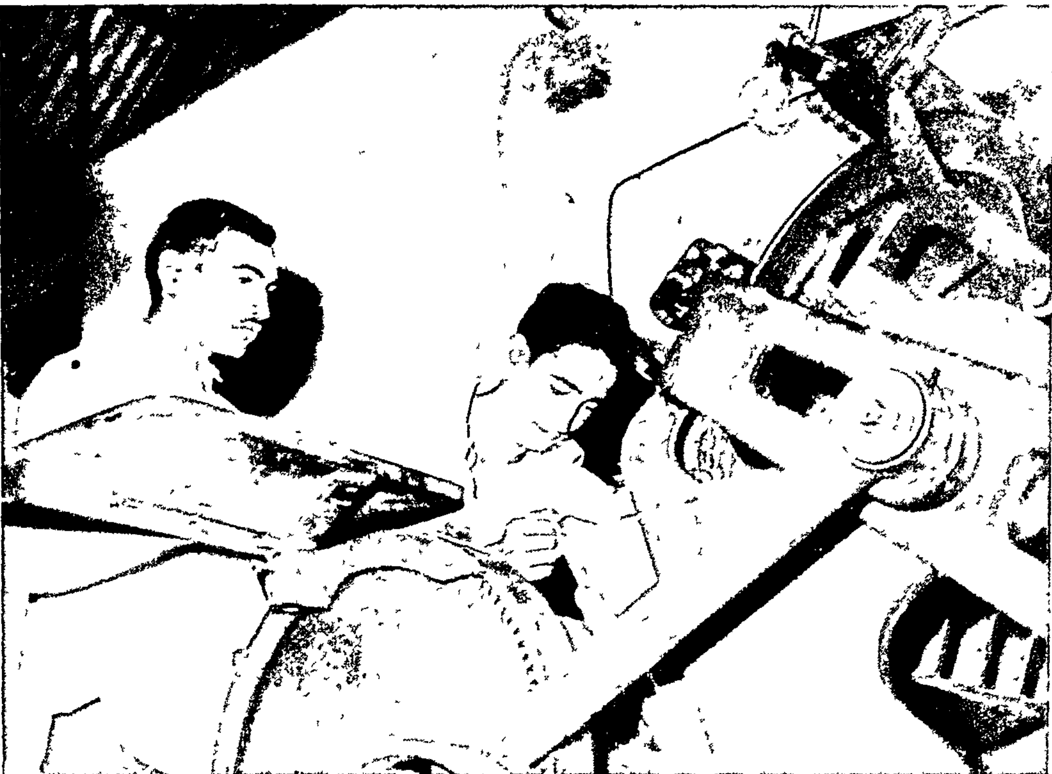
35 A farm hand walking along an irrigation ditch Rajput women rarely allow themselves to be photographed unveiled Note veil drawn aside with shyly downcast eyes



36. High School tailoring class at Shilpshala

37. Types of boys in the High School tailoring class

38 A Hıgh School boy makıng hıs own desk



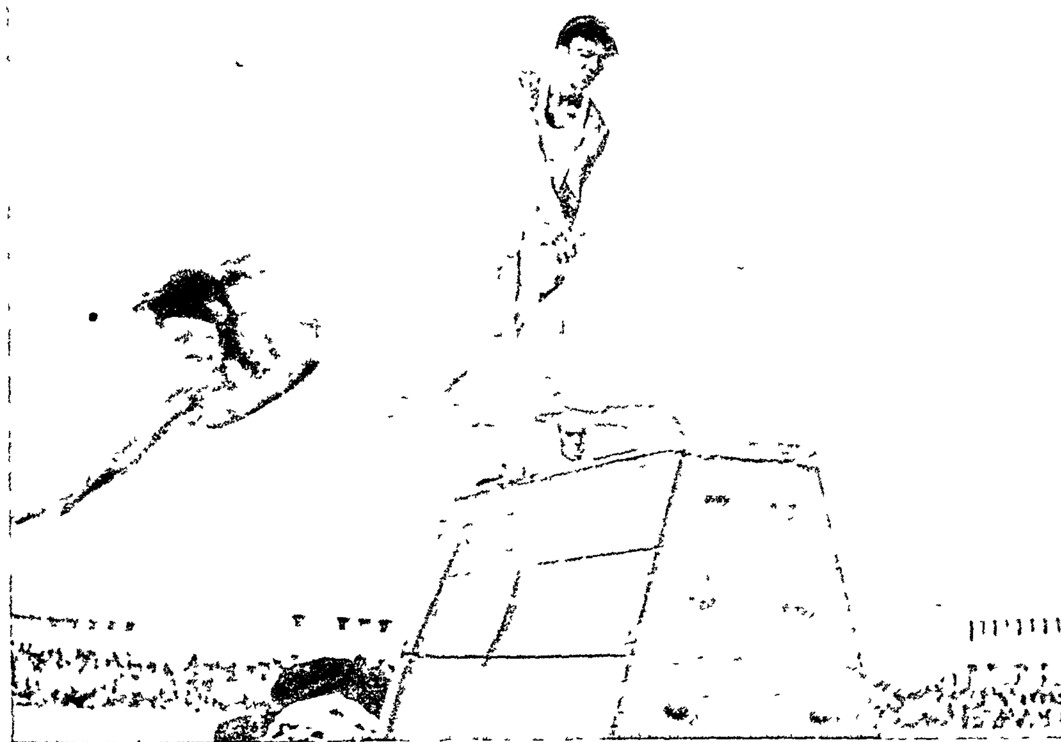
39 Hıgh School boys at the Shılpshala prıntıng press

40. Birla College playing fields with desert in rear

41. "Class dismiss!" P. T. on the High School playing fields



42 Birla College Compulsory P T



43. A gymnastic display



44. Birla College : putting the weight



45. Birla College : javelin throwing on the new playing field

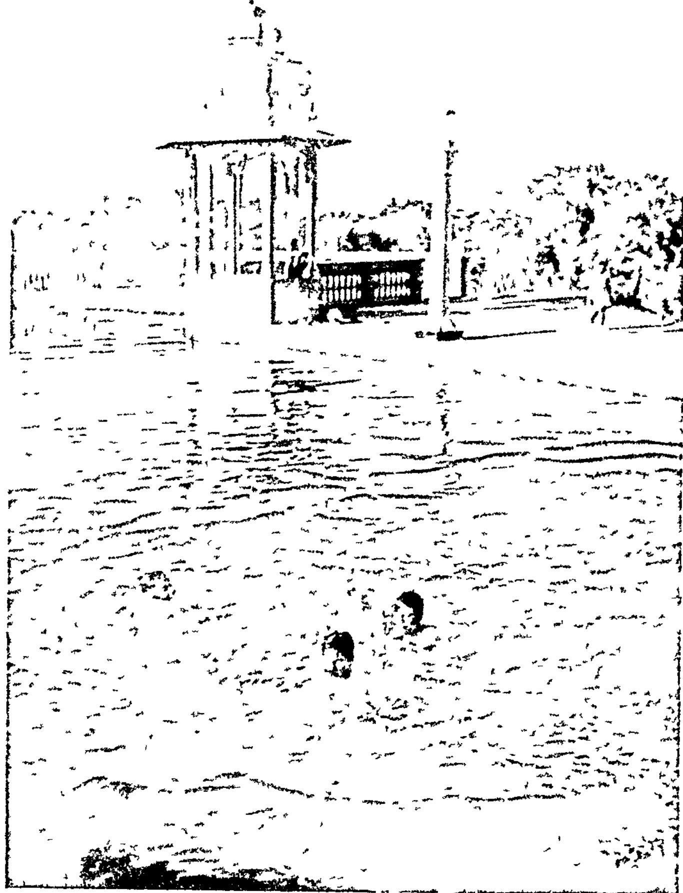


46 Birla College cricket

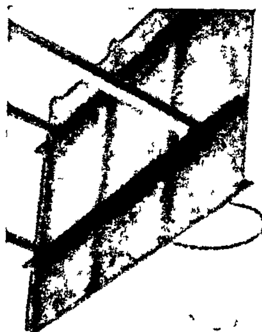


47 Joshi at the nets

48 The Birla Engineers are among the few who play base ball in India



49 A corner of the Canal Kothi swimming pool





50 Birla College basket ball

51 The President of the Indian Union, Doctor Rajendra Prasad, with Birla College athletes

52 Vidyapeeth girls doing rhythmical drill with lyceum, an instrument which makes a bell-like clash



53 Vidyapeeth girls doing P T. with *dunda* (stick). Note Vidyapeeth uniform described on page 209

54. Montessori boys at play. Note smiles on every face For architecture, See page 116

books catering for the tastes of boys of all ages. I saw many books like *The Boys' Book of Knowledge* in several volumes, and *Chambers's Illustrated Encyclopaedia*. These are intended, Pandit Muttoo told me, to help the inmates of this remote township towards a wider general knowledge of the world. History, science, and fiction were well served; but Muttoo deplored the deterioration in the standard of English, already noticeable since independence.

The school engages in the usual debates and theatricals while the *panchayat* gives opportunities for self-government. A Prime Minister and a cabinet elected by the boys, secure approval from the assembly of a budget which organises the expenditure of the fees collected from the boys for their various objects, and the *panchayat* gives prizes for the competitions that are part of boys' leisure-time activities. I shall revert to this later.

In 1949, an Itihas Parishad, inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, was started to promote interest in India's history. The Itihas Parishad has arranged a series of talks by distinguished persons, staged several plays, collected substantial sums for charitable purposes, and it assembled a museum at the time of Pandit Nehru's visit to the school in 1950.

Like so many other principals and teachers encountered in other chapters of this book, Pandit Muttoo deplores the absence of consistent standards of discipline in Indian homes.

"Discipline in the home and the school always reflects the religious, social, and political ideals of the age," he said to me. "In the home, these ideals are aften obscured by misdirected parental affection, pampering, and inconsistency, which cause anti-social behaviour in children. The burden of evolving a code of discipline is therefore on us schoolmasters. Unfortunately, in India our ideal of character training, set up by examining boards, is negative. A headmaster is asked to certify that he knows nothing against the character of a boy which should debar him from sitting for some examination. This negative attitude has permeated our schools. So long as they know nothing against a boy's character of the special kind that would debar him from an examination, it is no concern of theirs what social or personal ideals he holds or lacks."

"Discipline," he said again, "in the majority of schools in India is governed by two factors: (1) indifference to what the students are doing, providing that they don't obtrude upon the teacher's attention, and (2) the average teacher's

excessive love of exercising his authority and his insistence on unquestioning obedience. Teachers grow so used to being obeyed that they gradually lose the expectation of differences of opinion from others which a lawyer or a doctor, for example, assume to be normal. On the contrary, the schoolmaster often reaches a point at which any questioning of his views makes him lose his temper. Every teacher should be on his guard against this and take care that he does not enforce personal whims as principles.

"And different teachers in the same school have different sets of values, so that pupils are rewarded or punished under conflicting standards. How, then, can they be expected to have any true standards? Every school should have clearly defined standards to which all teachers should be expected to conform. Their example is more important than their preaching ever can be!"

"And not least," Muttoo concluded with a smile, "discipline based on love and respect moulds character the right way, whereas discipline based on fear breeds hypocrites and rebels."

One day, I perched side by side with Pandit Muttoo on the back of a *tonga* on the way to the games field, and again we talked.

"I saw a class going on in the Shilpshala as I passed," I said.

"That would be the tailoring class", Muttoo replied. "We've done crafts in the High School almost from the beginning, long before Gandhiji's ideas struck the headlines and made craft work the fashionable nostrum. With us, it was not a nostrum but an effort to meet a need. A large proportion of our boys from the village and the countryside do not go on to Universities, but stay here. For them, we have made one of the crafts compulsory—tailoring, carpentry, spinning, weaving, bookbinding, or shoemaking and mending. And you must see the High School farm before you go."*

We had now reached the old playing field, covering thirty-five acres reclaimed from the sandy scrub to the south-west of old Pilani. And here, for an hour, I watched Pilani's daily playtime routine—a huge panorama of sports.

Behind me rose a gymnasium upon a concrete base about eight feet above the ground, with a roof, but open on all sides. To my right, some twenty-five teams of Birla College Boys,

* See photograph no. 33.

clad in white shirts and khaki trousers, were doing their day's compulsory physical training.

In other directions, I saw four games of cricket going on. The characteristic hard whacks of bats striking balls, and an occasional excited cry of 'How's that?' came clearly through the slightly dust-dimmed sunlight.

Suddenly behind me, I heard: 'Ready! Get set! . . . ' and a loud report, and I turned to see runners practising a relay race, their bare feet sending the dust flying.

I saw no hockey or football that day because those games are played on the central field in New Pilani, but after a while I walked across to join three hobbled camels who, as they chewed their cuds with sideway thrusts of the jaw, were watching over the tops of some thorn trees a game of volley ball, of which, I imagine, they were not really taking the dim view suggested by their natural expressions of stoic gloom.

Far away on the other side of the vast field, I discerned a disused well near a half-ruined building. This well and building were prominent among the obstacles in the obstacle race during the combined sports that I saw a few weeks later. The spreading branches of two big trees cast a blotch of shadow on the yellow ground in the middle distance. From the branches were suspended oil drums—other obstacles—through which a few boys were climbing to and fro for practice; needless to say Armyn and Aminta raced across to join in at once.

Right in front of me were now drawn up in twenty straight rows most of the High School's 800 boys. Dressed in navy-blue shorts and jerseys, they were about to do massed P.T. There was a word of command, followed by cheerfully uproarious cacophony. I had heard of the High School band, but hearsay and hearplay are two different things and nothing had prepared me for the corybantic reality. Up and down, in front of the now agile 800, marched the band, a score of boys of all ages (including two incipiently bearded Sikhs), some energetically ratta-tat-tatting on side-drums, others blowing bagpipes and bugles alternately, switching from one to the other with disconcerting ease. The tune was "There Is a Happy Land" played with a rampagious vigour which I had never before known that hymn to inspire. Up and down marched the band, swinging the hymn on bugles; up, down, and sideways, went the arms of the 800. Up and down marched the band, joyfully skirling the hymn on bag-

pipes; in and out went the feet of the 800. One of the P.T. instructors, Mr. N. Sharma, stood in view of all upon the steps of the gymnasium and led the exercises, which were the conventional gymnastics reminiscent of the Sokols of Eastern Europe of pre-war days. It was a vigorous and creditable performance, requiring memory and concentration, and serving as a physical rouser for young energies after hours in classrooms. At the end of fifteen minutes, the school was dismissed and dispersed to games and sports of all kinds. A set of specialists came over the gymnasium and performed exercises on the ladders, bars, ropes, and vaulting horses. The outstanding performer was twelve-year old R. N. Rawal, who did *malkamba,* an Indian gymnastic carried out on a thick eight feet high wooden pole sunk into the concrete floor. After the pole had been oiled, Rawal climbed to the top and hung backwards, gripping it between his knees. He followed this up with exercises using different parts of his body as pivots, while he swung or hung at every possible angle, and climbed up or slid down the pole. He had a wonderful physique for one so young—husky, muscular, yet supple.

As I surveyed these happy activities in these great open spaces, my mind as usual went back to the squalid conditions and cramped quarters in which the average student in the cities of India lives, without access to playgrounds, good air and exercise (other than marching through the streets in political demonstrations). Few people realise their good fortune until they lose it, and I suggest that it would be educationally useful to take once every year a few representative students from each of Pilani's institutions on a tour of two or three typical city schools and colleges, just so that they can consciously enjoy to the full what they have in Pilani while they are still there.

That the Birla Education Trust was set up in the mofussil at Pilani was an accident if you like, but what was no accident was the way in which Pandeji exploited the confidence that the Trust placed in him and the limitless space that they provided and to which they are continually adding. Muttoo carried on the traditions that Pandeji built up while the High School was part of the Intermediate College, and the compulsory P.T. every evening followed by games, sports, and scouting, continues to be a prominent feature of the school. English and American readers, by whom such facilities are taken for granted as the background of every school, may

not at once catch the significance of this statement, but the vast numbers of Indians who are educated in overcrowded centres may read it with some envy.

The High School Scouts hold camps every year and practice their craft. During the years that the Jaipur State Tournament was held, the middle-school hockey team set up a record by winning the final for six years in succession. In scouting, the School won three times the Maharaja of Jaipur's flag for general efficiency. In 1950, a scout camp in Pilani assembled 1,000 scouts from all over Jaipur.

I visited the High School early one morning in order to attend the daily assembly for prayers before lessons. I found the whole school drawn up in rows facing East, looking into the newly risen sun which shone into their eyes making them screw up their faces. I listened to them singing Sanskrit *shlokas*, followed by the national anthem, while Mr. P. G. Mooley, the music master, accompanied them on the hand harmonium. Their rough and ready voices rang through the bright early morning air and echoed off the walls.

A 'BEST BEDROOM' COMPETITION

I WAS asked to judge one of the monthly bedroom competitions at the High School Hostel in old Pilani.

Each bedroom is marked throughout the month, and, on the last Sunday, someone is invited to go over them, comment upon their tidiness, admire their decorations, and the collections of stamps, pictures, postcards, coins, or any other personal items over which they have taken trouble, and deplore ink splodges on the walls or floor, or untidiness, or lack of cleanliness. It is a grand parade in which it is the visitor who parades (from room to room) and is inspected as minutely as he, or she, inspects the boys.

The hostel consists of two single-storied houses, built round courts which contain the gardens belonging to each bedroom or couple of bedrooms. There is also a large playroom containing table tennis, and other games, chess, chequers, etc.; there are seats to sit on and pictures on the walls to admire. The impression is one of simplicity and durability without frills. There is also a dining room and kitchen.

Each dormitory sleeps from three to eight boys. The monitors sleep together near the entrance in a superior room. The monitors take the roll calls, and are responsible for seeing that the boys are in bed by lights out. They are nominated

by the hostel wardens, who at that time were Mr. B. L. Sharma and Mr. R. C. Bhatia.

Some of the boys who came from very poor homes, had no spare pocket-money, and so could not display the interesting collections that others were able to spread out for us. But paper and paint, and photographs, plain and coloured, cut from magazines, did a lot to cheer up what would otherwise have been bleak rooms built for good service rather than good looks, and they helped to cover up ink stains and occasional chips which discolour any wall at the mercy of the young, armed with fountain pens and penknives. Mottoes such as : *A Stitch in Time Saves Nine, Early to Bed, Early to Rise* and *To Labour is to Pray,* hung from paper streamers in coloured printing, which must have required much measurement, patience, and time. The high standard of the High School Art Department under Mr. Bhoor Singh was frequently reflected in these hostel decorations.

Each boy had a bed, a work table, a big wall-cupboard and a metal trunk beneath his bed. As was to be expected amongst some of the boys who came from humble village surroundings, they had not all kept the white walls as clean as they might ; squirts of ink disfigured several rooms.

The wardens said that they were having trouble with a few individuals whose homes had given them no ideas of discipline, and they hoped that a visit from a stranger would make an impression. I took the hint and loudly deplored the unnecessary damage done to a few of the rooms, and said that, of course, there would be no prize for boys who were so careless. These tactics produced an effect in one room at least, where a group of boys apologised to me for their dirty walls, and were anxious to impress on me, first, that the damage had been done not by them but by their predecessors, and, secondly that they had not yet had time to clear it up but would have the whole place looking like an advertisement for Shalimar paints long before the next inspection. They were young, eager, and full of good will, so I smiled and said : "Good ! You'll win the prize next time."

One hostel prize went to a spotlessly clean room, whitewashed by the boys themselves, not too recently, containing clean and tidy work tables, decorated with vases of nicely arranged flowers, and adorned with well-spaced, uncrowded, pictures on the walls. The boys, three of whom were Sikhs, were well mannered and well groomed. I liked so much

the pleasant atmosphere of their room, with its nicely organised arrangements—tables where the light fell on them, their garden outside their door planted and weeded—that I recommended them for first prize.

The prize for the other hostel went to a room of big boys who had made a real living-room for themselves with interesting collections of photos, book shelves made by themselves, games trophies, tidily stacked hockey sticks, and comfortable furniture. Some of the bedrooms overdid the mottoes and pictures, and had obviously "put on a show" for my benefit.

In one bedroom, I was asked to stand still for a moment in the doorway. The boys then concentrated their gaze at a spot above my head. Nobody said a word. I saw one boy prepare to do something, I knew not what ! I hope that I did not look as apprehensive as I felt. I thought of buckets of water and fireworks—the classical tools of practical jokers. But the boy merely pulled a string, and I found my head and shoulders covered with marigold petals and rose leaves. A charming idea. But it had me nervous for a moment.

ART IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

THE HIGH SCHOOL prides itself on its Art department. Judging by the work that I saw in the better village schools and by conversations with several teachers, I have the impression that the children of Rajasthan are more gifted in art than the average. However, to any post-graduate in search of a subject for a thesis in psychology, I offer the following question: Is the obvious talent displayed by these Rajasthani children due to innate gifts or does it arise because they grow up seeing all around them examples of still flourishing folk art and crafts ? The dyeing of women's scarves and other garments, the embroidery of skirts and bodices, the block printing of quilts, and the decorating of thresholds with coloured designs, are still the lovely commonplaces of Pilani and the surrounding areas. Houses are still painted with vigorous pictures of Rajput warriors, gazelles, fair maidens, caparisoned camels, and overloaded war elephants. But the increasing difficulty of getting enough different colours in the old durable vegetable dyes is gradually bringing these pleasant arts to an end. Cheap aniline dyes wash off masonry. I am glad that fate sent me to Pilani to enjoy these delights before they disappear once and for all, as soon

they must.

It was outside school hours when I visited the Art room, but it was open for leisure-time enthusiasts and several boys were at work. A tall, handsome young man came forward to welcome us with a charming smile. This was Bhoor Singh, a native of Pilani, whose talent Pandit Muttoo had spotted when some years before he had been a High School boy. Muttoo noticed that although young Bhoor Singh was always hard at work in class, the results in marks were not brilliant. So Muttoo prowled behind Bhoor Singh to ascertain upon what it was that he was expending all this concentrated effort. He saw that Bhoor Singh was drawing caricatures of his classmates and his masters. Muttoo followed his own precepts by not exploding in wrath. He said nothing but continued to watch Bhoor Singh's work over a period. Then one day, he summoned him and asked him for a collection of all his best drawings. These Muttoo kept, and on the next occasion that G. D. Birla turned up in Pilani, he showed them to the Chairman of the Trust, and said :

"This boy has talent. He ought to be sent to the J. J. Arts School in Bombay to be taught properly. His parents couldn't afford to send him there. Will you do it ?"

G. D. Birla looked through the drawings again, then he said : "All right. Make the arrangements."

And Bhoor Singh spent the next five years working in Bombay under Mr. Gerrard, who was at that time head of the J. J. School.

Bhoor Singh encourages his boys to observe and paint the daily scenes around them and readily helps them to produce the effects that they seek by teaching them a variety of techniques : plain brush-work, chalk and tempera ; stipple ; oils ; pastels; pen and ink; pencil; poster work with printing. Designs drawn from flowers or purely geometrical in inspiration are frequent in the High School.

I saw some of the interesting results that this freedom of choice produces : a caricature of Muttoo ; local scenes in village homes and streets; peacocks posed against the moon; comic fat men bargaining over a marriage between their children ; women quarrelling ; dream mountains and lakes in bold brush-strokes of pinks and browns done by a young boy who has never seen anything but flat Pilani ; and the nightmares of a boy who went through the partition massacres in 1947 : in broad strokes of white and mauve, black and pink,

he had conjured up fearful visions of half-human forms, the expressions of whose eyeless sockets haunted me with their despair. I had not thought it possible that a child could have succeeded so well in communicating the terror of his experiences.

Upon the walls hung larger-than-life portraits in pencil of Gandhiji, Maria Montessori, and C. F. Andrews, copies from photographs by Bhoor Singh's twelve-year old son, whom he had trained to do this type of work. They were good likenesses, well done; you know how awful copies of photographs can be!

One ex-pupil took up the Rajput type of painting and went to Shantiniketan to complete his training. But even before he left, his pictures of war horses and warriors, in the old harness and costumes, were vigorous and colourful.

Another boy, who used to spend holidays hiking in the Himalayas, and who had wandered into remote districts, painted pictures of the snows, rocks, mountain streams, and plants. He caught admirably the clear mountain light in a group of figures beside a waterfall, worshipping the sun at dawn.

The same over-all remarks that I have made about the art work in the Vidyamandir at Naini Tal apply to the High School, namely, that most Indians approach the teaching of art without the inhibitions with which so many Western teachers are burdened. So deeply ingrained in India is the habit of following along a traditional path, of accepting the time-honoured custom of serving apprenticeship to a master artist or craftsman, that, without any sense of guilt, teachers give instruction in proportion, perspective, and even in successful methods of achieving a definite effect. Educationists of high standing are ready to "show the child how" in many subjects "because they learn quicker that way," and therefore "reach a higher standard". Most Indian teachers are puzzled when you tell them that in England and America such short-cuts are not considered "playing fair" to the child, and that teachers who employ them are accused of damaging one of the essentials of intelligence—the capacity to learn from trial and error, thus denying to many children the self-confidence-building thrill of original achievement. Indians are apt to deplore the unformed attempts made by British children—the crude colours, wild perspective, and top-heavy proportions, and explain them as evidence of innate inferiority. Few understand that British children receive almost no direct instruc-

tion in these matters, and that the maxim governing most work nowadays is "Don't teach them anything; let them find it out." Of course, the means by which children may best "find it out" are much discussed. Many teachers have their own individual methods of approach to children, using music, poetry, dancing, games, and even mathematics, to stimulate powers of imagery. Some achieve fascinating results : one eleven-year old child of my acquaintance produced under the influence of Beethoven's Eroica Symphony an Easter picture of the Crucifixion that would have fetched a price from any shrewd art dealer, so emotional were the colours, so tragic the line and composition. Other teachers are unable to touch off the fountains of talent, and their classes achieve little.

MUSIC AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

It is as difficult for a European to understand Indian music the first time that he hears it, as it is for an Indian to make head or tail of, say, Bach on a first hearing. The Indian ear is used to melody and is not used to distinguishing many instruments speaking at once in harmony. Since no group of players can improvise harmony, the European discovery of harmony necessitated the writing down of scores. Improvisation, however, is the essence of traditional Indian music, and one of the difficulties encountered by the European ear is that the absence of harmony allows for greater elasticity in the sounds produced: in Western music, you are either on the note or off it; but the uninstructed European ear often has difficulty in knowing where it is, as it were, in listening to Indian music.

Improvisation naturally leads to comment on the surrounding scenes. You hear the handcart men of Bihar raising their rough peasant voices in song through the streets of Calcutta as they return with empty carts from delivering a load. The grins of their fellows suggest that it is as well that passing Bengalis cannot understand what they are singing. A boy of about nine-years old passes singing under my window almost every day on his trip to and from the shops. The last heavy monsoon downpour inspired him especially, and he sang of how much water had fallen, and how the streets were flooded so that the cars splashed and the people waded. He finished with *Jor se pani barsa*... *Ek*! "Came a great shower...... one!" *Ek*! as an afterthought! Living, spontaneous music, however uncouth.

Again, to the uninstructed ear, Indian instruments seem less differentiated than European, and I find it difficult to distinguish between the sounds of India's many imposing instruments, some of which look as though they were made out of large varnished pumpkins attached to broad necks, knobbly with large pegs, and covered with innumerable shining strings. Beautiful designs in ivory-inlay, point their construction, and small garlands often hang from their racey, curved butts. Some have shapes which remind me of Chinese junks, of galleons, or of *sabots*. Strange, to the European, is their intimate, gentle, almost buzzing, quality—some, indeed, make no more noise than a bee—unlike the strong, concentrated, and sharply individual notes emitted by the sixty-five instruments used in a modern Western symphony orchestra. Many of our instruments have reached their fullest development as parts in a corporate whole, indeed have only come into being in response to the search for a certain quality of tone in the overall harmony.

Although there are small orchestras consisting of a simple form of pipe, percussion, water bowls, and stringed instruments, the majority of Indian music-making is solo singing or playing.

It is the opinion of some experts that Indian music has developed as far as, in the absence of harmony, it can. Western music has, of course, impinged on Indian music in the cities through the radio and gramophone, and the average Indian's idea of Western music is largely derived from dance bands. Westerners who have any feeling for music are apt to deplore the spreading influence of this dance music, which is, after all, nothing but a limited series of *clichés*. Although I sympathise with their feelings, I suggest that they are perhaps mistaken, because popular Indian interest in jam, swing, and jive, is creating a demand for Indian arrangers and composers, and thus opening the door to the large-scale development of Indian music. Sooner or later, some Indian composer of genius will arise who will use harmony to express Indian emotions and ideas in a manner and on a scale that traditional Indian music does not attempt.

It may well be that the foregoing paragraphs are an unconscious display of my ignorance of Indian music. If so, this is not altogether my fault. I tried to remedy it in Pilani and failed. If circumstances prevent one from taking lessons oneself, the next best way to learn to appreciate arts like music or dancing is to watch others being taught. I

heard that the High School claimed to lead every other Pilani institution in music, which, indeed, is not an "extra" but forms part of the High School curriculum. With such thoughts on Indian music in my head as those outlined above, I was anxious to attend a class, to see what instruction in notation was given, to see what the problems of teacher and taught were. But with five major institutions to be investigated, not to mention all the rural schools and ancillary items like the Rajasthan Society, the Library, and the dairy farm, my days were full, and it was not until my return visit in November, 1952, that I was able to look in on the High School music department. I sent word that I wanted to watch a class.

As I walked along the sunny verandah towards the music room, I heard the sound of stringed instruments, played loudly and confidently, mingled with the bell-like but unmetallic notes of some instrument that was being struck. The melody of these notes went up and down a *raga,* and was thereafter repeated with embroideries and variations. The music became faster but there were no *crescendos* or *diminuendos.*

I waited until the end of the exercise and then entered. I saw twenty-five boys sitting on the floor in rows, while a dozen others were playing together at one end of the room under the eyes of Mr. P. G. Mooley.

I counted two harmoniums, a wooden pipe, a violin, three zithars, one stringed instrument of which I did not know the name, a set of drums, a set of bells which were shaken in rhythm, and a set of china bowls in diminishing sizes each filled with water to different levels. These bowls, struck with wooden sticks, had made the bell-like melody that I had heard outside—a delightful sound, clear, and non-metallic. Several other large stringed instruments, one of them a vina, were ranged round the walls, all decorative and extraordinary to my uninstructed eye.

My uninstructed eye! Read that as an expletive indicating rage and exasperation and you will be right. For Mr. Mooley had, doubtless with the best of intentions, done exactly what I did not want. This was no music lesson in which I could share and learn something of Indian technique. It was merely the school orchestra assembled to impress the visitor with their skill in some set show-pieces. I had a schedule of investigations to fulfil, timed hour by hour, and was unable to return to watch a lesson on another day. Thus,

to my regret, has my ignorance of Indian music been carefully preserved for me!

There is little that I can report about this class, because there was little to observe but boys sitting in rows. Three set pieces, previously learned by heart, were played for me. The first was a melody on the *raga Saranga,* in *addhatala* time. The *raga* was played on the instruments as a theme, then came variations, always, of course, in unison. After the water in the bowls had been re-adjusted to different levels for a new *raga,* and after the instruments had been tuned, another piece was played on the *raga Bihag* in *trital.* I noticed many passages in triplets. Finally, a boy sang, accompanying himself upon the zithar, repeating those few gently buzzing notes which make such an effective background to the Indian style of voice production. And that was all. Alas!

THE FUTURE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

MR. G. S. JOSHI was appointed to succeed Pandit Muttoo in August, 1952, and when I met him in November he had already prepared the ground for a number of interesting changes. Mr. Joshi has in Dr. A. Chandra Sekhar an able and cultured assistant headmaster, who has spent four years in post-graduate study of education in America. Mr. Joshi's experience and energy and Dr. Chandra Sekhar's modern standards should gradually produce new results in the High School.

Mr. Joshi was educated at the Morris Science College, Nagpur, and spent the years 1927-29 studying French, German, and English, at the University of Cologne, followed by six months at the Sorbonne, Paris. In 1930, he was appointed an assistant master at the well-known Rajkumar College, Rajkot. He returned to Europe in 1938 for three months' study at Dijon and Munich; he secured the Diploma of Education in both of these universities. He remained at the Rajkumar College until 1950. His wife, Mrs Indra Joshi, B.A., B.T., is headmistress of the big Manvir Girls' School in Kutch.

Mr. Joshi is a keen *shikari* (hunter), but fortunately for the local pigeon and partridge population who grow plump off Pilani's crops, *shikar* is not allowed on the Trust's estates. Mr. Joshi played hockey for Cologne University against Holland in 1928, and has played cricket regularly for two well-known amateur clubs—the Hindus and the C.P. Quad-

rangles. I have a pleasant picture in my mind of Mr. Joshi in a remarkable old hat swinging a mallet on the Old Pilani playing field to knock pegs into the ground to hold up the cricket nets. This done, he set about bowling and batting for innumerable small boys, demonstrating and instructing with unflagging vigour and keeness all the evening. I foresee that the High School cricket will now move on to higher levels. Mr. Joshi is a strong believer in the value of games, and his own spare and athletic frame shows no sign of yielding to that middle aged spread.

Like all Indian headmasters, Mr. Joshi is pre-occupied with the problems of discipline.

"There is an old Sanskrit saying," he said to me, " 'If you want to plant for one year, grow crops; if you want to plant for ten years, grow trees ; if you want to plant for a hundred years, grow men.' A lot of nonsense is talked about the future of India. The real builders of the future are only now in the nursery schools. They have been born into a free India and will grow up unhampered by any inferiority complex. Many teachers only corrupt their pupils by passing on attitudes of mind which must be uprooted before a new India can be created. We must get rid of the slave mentality."

Mr. Joshi placed this sense of inferiority at the heart of India's moral problem.

"The crux of morality is freedom," he asserted.

I agreed with Mr. Joshi that political independence would have important and beneficial psychological effects on India's peoples, but I suggested that the subservient attitude of mind that he was rightly criticising had existed long before foreigners set up their rule. The habit of exaggerated deference to those in authority is universal in all countries in which true democracy does not exist, or where, as in India, it has as yet but the slenderest roots. The rights of the individual and the dignity of man are now enshrined in the Indian constitution, but it will take years of education before they become widespread realities. The idea of inherited status has been accepted as part of the natural order for too many centuries to be displaced overnight. But if fear of authority and expectation of obedience without question are not peculiar to India, at least under India's independent constitution there is now a chance that a new attitude of mind will be developed in the course of the generations to come.

Mr. Joshi agreed that indiscipline among students and teachers was not solely due to foreign occupation. "Now,"

he said, "we need self-discipline, particularly among the teachers who set the tone and the example. Few have any training or any real love for their profession, which most take up because they have failed to find anything else. But that is no excuse for not doing your job properly."

"The problems of discipline are as acute among masters as among students ?" I asked.

"In many schools, it is commonplace for masters to lose their tempers and their dignity and to inflict unjust punishments on defenceless pupils. Some masters have been known to stir up their boys against another master whom they don't happen to like."

"How can one expect loyal and co-operative citizens to be trained by disloyal and unco-operative masters !" I said.

"Exactly", said Mr. Joshi. "But here, in the High School, we do not allow that sort of thing. Here, a *panchayat* of the boys in each class manages discipline. The whole school is divided into four Houses; each House sends twenty representatives to the school parliament of eighty boys. Our masters cannot inflict arbitrary punishments. They are limited to framing a charge. It is for the class *panchayat* to decide the punishment. And if a boy feels that the *panchayat* has been unjust, he can appeal to the school parliament which can uphold or reject his appeal. The whole school elects a Prime Minister and eight ministers who organise the school activities under the headings of games, sports, literary, cleanliness and health, law and order, rehabilitation, etc."

"Rehabilitation?"

"We have a number of refugee boys who create problems here as everywhere else. What we need is gradually to turn the High School into a really good residential school with the grounds enclosed. Then there will be less need for 'rehabilitation'. We shall find it easier to make the boys feel that they belong to a community which requires their help and loyalty."

Mr. Joshi chuckled. "Many schools have a guidance department for their pupils," he said, "but I wouldn't be surprised if our High School is the only school in the world which has a guidance department for masters! Dr. Sekhar's new guidance outfit will offer service to masters as well as to boys. Our masters have no cause to feel aggrieved about this. On the contrary, they ought to be pleased. After all, every profession has its problems, and what is a guidance department except a means of enabling people to talk over

their difficulties and get another view on them? In fact, if our guidance department is as successful as I hope it will be, it might well attract masters from schools outside Pilani. Few masters in India have ever had any educational psychological instruction. Our guidance department has possibilities of widespread development."

"What form do your punishments take?"

"I'm trying to spread the idea that the punishment should fit the crime," Mr. Joshi said. "For example, the other day a boy was caught destroying school property. So I made him work in the garden in order to put back into the property something of what he had destroyed. An incidental result was that that boy became interested in gardening, and spends much of his spare time at it, or in the school farm. Then again, if a boy skips a class, or does not do his home work properly, he must prepare a carefully thought out lecture on the responsibilities of a good citizen. The scheme works. We have even found now and again that boys who have done something wrong without being discovered will come forward and ask to be given extra work in the garden."

"But, of course," Mr. Joshi said with a sigh as he reverted to the universal theme of every thoughtful schoolmaster in India, "discipline can never be wholly effective without cooperation from parents. That is why I want gradually to transform the High School into a residential school. Since so many parents cannot understand what is meant by cooperation and what we want from them if we are to make their boys into good citizens, the next best thing is to try to remove the boys as far as possible from parental influence."

Assistant Headmaster Dr. Chandra A. Sekhar looks so young that I could hardly believe that he has a grown up daughter. He is assured, well groomed, speaks don's English, and has had a distinguished career in three universities. He was born and brought up at Nagercoil, twelve miles from Cape Comorin. He took his Ph. D. in Dravidian Linguistics and Culture at Bombay in 1948. In the same year, he became a member of the Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, as a visiting lecturer. In 1950, he was given a Fellowship at Michigan University, where he stayed until 1952. While in America, he made a study of educational methods and was a member of the 'Evaluation' committee appointed by Pennsylvania state.

"An evaluation committee is a means of inducing schools to take stock of their own work, to try to evaluate their

successes and failures," he explained. "The committee tours the schools, and listens to teachers explaining their own work—evaluating it before the committee."

"That," I said, "must promote a two-way exchange of ideas from the committee into the schools and from the schools through the committee all over the state, like blood flowing through arteries."

"Yes," said the Doctor. "By forcing teachers to justify themselves, it makes them re-think their methods out, and promotes self-criticism. The committee finally sits in judgment on each school and makes recommendations, offered in no carping spirit, but as contributions to progress. Moreover, owing to the two-way flow of ideas, their recommendations are the result of joint consultations and usually emerge as agreed views, thus reducing friction to the minimum."

The Doctor now turned to a wall map of India behind him, dotted with red spots, thickest in Rajasthan and the North.

"This map has a red spot at every place from which our hostel boarders come. This is my first step towards an investigation of our High School's educational raw material. I am building up a dossier of each boy's home influences. Until my material is complete, no real guidance can begin. But give me a little time. I've only been here six weeks so far."

"There must be many ways of classifying boys," I thought aloud. "Havelock, the nineteenth-century British general, used to say that in any regiment, there were ten percent useless men, criminal or other bad types, that you had to weed out as quick as you could; ten percent natural leaders who would go anywhere and do anything; and eighty percent average good fellows who would go anywhere and do anything if properly led. Then, I've heard an Indian headmaster classify his boys as normal, abnormal, subnormal, and criminal. The same can be said of any big mixed school, I should imagine."

"The boys in this school," said the Doctor, "come from five main groups : (1) the lower middle class, financed by the Birla Mills' scheme for educating the children of employees; (2) rural boys, the sons of cultivators and others from the Pilani environs; (3) middle class boys from the Pilani business classes; (4) middle class boys from the business classes from afar; and (5) homeless refugee boys, some looked after by the Trust, others boarded with people who have taken them out of charity, or in some cases as potential additional

earners for the family."

"Whole constellations of troubles, of course, circulate round these unfortunate refugees, whose most impressionable years have taught them that the world is a place of terror, violence, cruelty, slaughter, rape, and burning villages. But once my raw material is completed, I hope that my guidance service will help to solve their problems."

"What about your guidance service for masters? That'll be a ticklish job, if you are not to undermine their authority with the boys."

Dr. Chandra Sekhar gave me a quick look. "We want," he said firmly, "their authority to be based upon respect and co-operation, and I have devised a method whereby masters and boys should be able to avoid friction and to co-operate. The syllabus, which is, of course, that laid down by Rajasthan University, is made known to all. Then, each teacher is expected to keep a diary in which he draws up his scheme of work and his lessons. As soon as a lesson is completed, he is expected to enter the work done. A chart entitled 'Forecast and Completion' hangs on every class room wall, and masters and students jointly fill in the work done day by day. In that way, there can be no dispute that a master has neglected any part of his syllabus. That, however, is a negative way of looking at the object of these charts. While they serve the incidental purpose of keeping a check on everybody, avoiding the necessity for investigations and tale bearing, their main purpose is to develop co-operation between masters and students, a sense of class pride in the achievement of work done in common, and to stimulate competition with other classes. A prize is given for the chart that shows the term's best record of co-operation and achievement,"

It seems to me that the ideas of Mr. Joshi and Dr. Chandra Sekhar deserve to be investigated by educationists far beyond the confines of Pilani.

CHAPTER VII

EDUCATION IN THE VILLAGES

"COW-DUST TIME"

TYPICAL of the villages among which, as soon as he had got the High School and the Intermediate College running smoothly, Pandeji launched his rural education work, is the village of the great banyan tree.

It is ancient and it is small. There are not more than fifty houses, built of baked yellow mud with grey-thatch roofs, clustering along the top of a steep ridge which gives the villagers a field of vision against surprise visits from the unknown. In rear, on the flat or plateau side of the village, between the houses and the cultivated fields, a ditch has been dug, and a thick black hedge of cut thorn branches built up, to keep out marauders, whether man or beast. The track into the village is blocked every night by dragging a pile of thorns (always in readiness) across it. Little courtyards, with gates and low walls, lie beside and round some of the houses. Two or three thatched grain stores on wooden stilts, with ventilation holes poked into their walls, rise picturesquely beside the smooth naked surfaces of others. Beyond a brick-walled school and a tumble-down temple, one of the biggest banyan trees in Rajasthan throws its spread-eagling arcades, through whose gnarled Arthur-Rackham tassels and twistings gleams the setting sun.

A whitewashed brick well is in full evening swing. Such is the weight of the goatskin full of water brought up from its 200 foot depths, that it takes two women, bent like human set-squares, to drag the rope down the long runway, worn into a deep gully by ten thousand thousand slow gut-straining hauls. A man at the well head swings the dripping goatskin onto the stone platform, while he chants the news of the day with his own up-to-the-minute commentary. Women walk to and from the well with brass pots or terra-cotta *chatties* on their heads.

Beyond the sandy stretch is a forest of mingled fruit and thorn trees whose bare branches point fingers into the white evening mist. Flocks of goats and sheep, young camels, and many donkeys, are trailing home from the forest towards the village, feathers of white dust at their feet, a gentle haze of it above them merging into the twilight, the beautiful Marwari word for which is *godhuli*—cow-dust time.

Sun-dazed children, cream-coloured with dust to mid-thigh, plod in with their beasts, prodding, whacking, and shouting the cajolery and objurgations universal from man to beast in all countries. Women carrying bundles of firewood on their heads move slowly on, not gracefully but rigid in resistance to their burdens. From the four points of the compass they converge on the village; the last lap is uphill: the hooves of the beasts, no less than the bare feet of the men, women, and children, strive for foothold in the hard-soft slithering sands; all lean one way, homewards, as if wading against a tide. Young though the herds-children are, their faces are already screwed up by the sun's naked glare. The clothes of girls and boys alike are nondescript rags, but all have a cloth wound round their heads, and all carry a big stick. Many children wear a silver charm on their necks. The immature pigtails of the girls stick out straight from the back of their heads; most have a silver button held on their foreheads by a black string.

Neither children nor beasts lead Arcadian lives. They cover miles in search of fodder or water. So scarce is grazing that the goats often climb high into the branches of big trees to get bark, leaves, or buds. And there are strange encounters: Colonel Gaisford, of the old Political Department, told me long ago that he had once come upon a tiger struggling along with a squirming goat between its jaws. Trotting by the tiger's side, undeterred by its angry snarls, was a small boy, yelling curses, walloping its flanks, making the dust fly from its tawny fur.

As the crimson globe sank, I became aware of a village *chowkidar* at my side, ready for work, blanket over shoulders, brass pot in one hand, strong staff in the other. Astride one hip he cradled a motionless blind baby, victim of the dust infections which have afflicted the eyes of so many children in this village.

Peacocks roosting in the trees screamed their long raucous challenges to the oncoming dark.

Several camels, ridden by spare figures, restlessly pacing to and fro just outside the village's encircling thorn hedge, set off down the slope. The evening breeze caught the dust that flared from each step that they took and blew it along in white knee-level wisps. It is always cooler to travel after sunset, although the night has its dangers which, curiously enough, are in rural India linked, like the federal budget and so many other phenomena, to the success or failure of the

monsoon. After two seasons of crop failure, poverty is abject, and the lean look of these people is not purely racial. Cattle are stolen, inter-state smuggling of excisable goods becomes more profitable than ever, and kidnapping increases. While I was in Pilani, a rich man's son was ransomed for Rs. 1,25,000/-, and I saw photographs of *dacoits* shot by the patrol that eventually caught up with the kidnappers.*

As the dark green sky merged into star-sprinkled purple, I entered the village street. On my right stood two stone houses, miniatures of Pilani's great *havelis,* belonging to wealthy *banyas.* Their walls were painted in the Rajput tradition, with figures of warriors, war-elephants, camels, rose trees, damsels, and deer, on a pale green wash.

The smell of cow-dung fuel betokened evening meals, and one by one little *chirags* shone out through doorways. The sound of wood being chopped and the munching of a water-buffalo behind a thorn hedge distracted me, so that I was nearly bowled over by a herd of determined shadows barging straight ahead—the cattle, homing silently in the dust. A whiff of damp sweet earth from an irrigated patch near another well brought the chill-of-eve and the dark together. Night had fallen.

DRUMS, LANTERNS, AND SWINGS

LIKE SO MUCH peasantry the world over, the people in these villages were indifferent to education until they were aroused to its value. When the first Birla school was opened, the schoolroom more often than not was empty, although numerous children, small and curious, came to peer through the door. Parents saw no point in urging them to cross the threshold.

One morning a lorry arrived and delivered a number of strange objects, never before seen in Pilani, for the school compound. The next day, swings, see-saws, and a chute, stood invitingly ready, but the compound gate was locked after the few pupils had arrived in the morning: there followed an instant upsurge in the demand for schooling in Pilani.

When, however, the joys of swing and chute had staled, school attendance also became irregular. So the pupils of these first village schools were told that they had to earn their swings and see-saws by a full week's attendance: "No school, no swings".

* See photograph no 9.

17

Gradually the tree began to blossom. Parents suddenly saw the point when little Gudjoo began to keep the accounts of the family shop ; when little Mailal managed to send for financial help by writing a postcard to grand-uncle Hari in Jaipur; and when Chandra interpreted the bus time table to a grinning crowd of hefty farmers.

But plans were afoot to educate the adults as well. In the evenings, when their own school work was done, groups of masters and students from the Birla College would sally forth to neighbouring villages with lighted lanterns and drums. They would set a lantern down in the dust beside a village well or near the little thatched *chawpals*[*]. The sight of an unaccustomed lantern, and the beating of a drum, drew a crowd of curious children and villagers.

Pandeji's opening gambit "Would anyone like to send a postcard to a friend?" would be followed by embarrassed laughter and murmurs.

"Come along. Is there any here called Hari? You? Look! This is how you sign your name", Pandeji would say, stooping to write in the dust by the light of the lantern. "There! Now, what do you want to say?"

More laughter and discussion, till the embarrassed Hari is pushed forward. After reflection he calls out : "Say : 'I am well and how are you?' ".

The villagers greet each other with the name of god, *Ram,* which is to be interpreted as "How are you?" and reply with *Ram, Ram,* "I am well". So together Hari and Pandeji would practice this, and Hari's signature, in the dust. "Next time I come, if you will bring me a postcard, *and* if you remember these letters, you will be able to send it off".

Next time, a large and serious class would squat around the lantern, all writing in the sand, and spelling the letters out aloud.

The day came when the postcards were actually despatched; and even the day when the replies were received. At last Pandeji felt sufficiently encouraged to ask G. D. Birla for funds to build schools and to employ permanent teachers.

These excursions into the countryside added variety to the experience of the Birla College boys, and inspired some to similar social work in after life. Several times in the ensuing years Pandeji has been invited by old students to visit a village school or institution modelled on the work at Pilani.

[*] *Chawpal* : Assembly house used by the headman of the village, where the *panchayat,* and others, meet for discussion.

SHYAMI MAI

THE TRUST'S rural activities in those early days in the nineteen-thirties brought to light a remarkable personality.

One day, Pandeji was told that a village woman who had come from afar to see him stood without. Because she was a *chamar*, she was waiting for him not merely outside the house so that she should not pollute it, but even outside the gate of the garden. Her name was Shyami Mai; her family were nomads, based on the village of Pipli. She told Pandeji that she had heard that he was a good and charitable man and that he was building schools. She wanted him to build a well for the *chamars* at Pipli; they had no well of their own, and she did not need to tell Pandeji the hardship and suffering that this caused them. She wanted Pandeji to build a school beside the well; she had seen how useful education was, how it raised up those who had it : a man who could read and write was no longer at the mercy of others.

Pandeji listened with sympathy and respect, but also with sadness, for the Trust's funds were heavily committed at the time, and he had none to spare for Pipli. He would have to put her off with promises for a future that he feared might be distant. Suddenly he found himself holding two heavy bags that the outcaste woman had thrust into his hands.

"There is money that I have collected. Please build us a well and a school with it". Shyami Mai pleaded.

"How much money is this?" asked Pandeji.

"Much, much money. More than I can count", Shyami Mai said.

"I will count it. Come", Pandeji said, and led the way to the verandah where he poured the pice, annas, and silver rupees onto a table.

Regretfully, Pandeji had to break it to Shyami Mai that the several hundred rupees that she had brought were not enough.

"How much more do you want? I will collect it".

Pandeji thanked her warmly, praised her for her good work, explained that about another Rs. 2,000/- was needed before a well could be built and a school opened at Pipli.

"I will bring you the money", Shyami Mai said and went away.

"She never stopped working", Pandeji hold me. "I heard of her, from time to time, going round the towns and villages

all over the District, month after month, begging from door to door for her school. She herself lived on a pittance, starving herself to add to her school fund, wearing rags in winter. *Chamar* she may have been, but she was a noble woman".

Shyami Mai became well known throughout Shekhawati, and as it was noised abroad that Pandeji was backing her efforts, people gave more freely. If any man refused her, she would squat outside his door, in patient, silent, and public reproach, day after day, until he paid up to end his embarrassment. It was not too long before she had collected the money. Her well and her school were built. She especially pleaded that the well for the *harijans* should be dug within the school grounds and that plants and flowers should be grown around it. This was before the war.

If you did not know the story of Shyami Mai's well and school, you would easily pass them by; they are nothing special to look at. But none who know can see them without thinking of the imagination and the willpower that brought them into being. When I looked at the well, I saw that care and thought had been spent upon it. Cool greenery immediately surrounded it, and tall stems of maize cultivated by the children grew in rows on adjacent lower ground. Shyami Mai's school and well together form a restful spot.

The framed photograph that Pandeji put up in the schoolroom has disappeared; no plaque commemorates Shyami Mai's name on her school or on her well. She is dead, and her story with her. But her work lives. Her influence is felt by an ever growing number of men and women, unaware that they owe their start in life, a few rungs higher up the ladder, to the goodness, courage, and determination of a woman and an untouchable.

HANDICRAFTS AND "BASIC EDUCATION"

WE HAVE SEEN the importance that Pandeji attached to handicrafts (Chapter v, p. 68), that he introduced them into the Birla College in 1931 and made them compulsory for all in 1935. It was, therefore, natural that he should also introduce them into his rural schools from the beginning, as soon as it was possible to organise supplies of raw materials and equipment.

But now we must record that in 1939, seven years after the first introduction of crafts in Pilani, Agatha Harrison and the late Reverend C. F. Andrews were invited down to open a

Vernacular Middle School that was to be conducted in accordance with Mahatma Gandhi's "Wardha Scheme" (or "Basic Education") which was, of course, based on handicrafts. The school was intended to ensure that the Mahatma's experiment should be carried out under the auspices of an established educational institution, and one which might be expected to carry it out helpfully and sympathetically.

It is, therefore, of interest to enquire in what way Mahatma Gandhi's views about crafts differed from those already in practice in Pilani, and what happened to this middle school.

In order to answer these questions, a brief explanation of Mahatma Gandhi's aims is necessary. This is more difficult than it may seem because, from the moment of its birth, Basic Education was hurled into the political arena, which is a place designed to enjoy the emotions of gladiatorial combats rather than the anaemic expositions of the mere sifter of evidence.

In their standard *History of Education in India,* Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik describe Basic Education as "undoubtedly the most epoch-making event in the history of primary education in modern India" and refer to "these revolutionary proposals". Mahatma Gandhi himself succinctly defined his aims thus :

> But the scheme that I wish to place before you today is not the teaching of some handicrafts side by side with so-called liberal education I want that the whole education should be imparted through handicraft or industry. The remedy lies in imparting the whole art and science of craft through practical training, and there-through imparting the whole of education.

In addition, it was an essential part of the Mahatma's scheme, that education should be self-supporting, the pupils paying for their costs by selling their products. He had toyed with this idea for thirty years and more but had given no special prominence to it in his teachings until, in 1937, Congress party ministries were formed in seven provinces. The Congress party had long criticised the British Government of India for its "indifference" to the education of the masses, and it took office pledged to large-scale measures. The British Government of India had tried to meet the charge of indifference by pointing out that the cost to public funds of elementary education in England and Wales was £16-17-1 per head and that, on this basis, the bill for free and compulsory education of the 53,000,000 children between the ages of six and fourteen in British India alone (i.e. excluding the

Indian states with a global adult population of 100,000,000) would cost Rs. 1,170 crores or £900,000,000 a year, that is about 80 times the total expenditure on education of all kinds and grades from public funds in India in 1935-36, or nearly six times the then total revenues, central and provincial, of the whole country. Official spokesmen conceded that elementary education in India would cost much less than in England, but argued that even if the English figures were divided by ten (i.e. £1-13-0 or Rs. 22/- per head), compulsory education was still beyond India's spending capacity.

But the Congress ministries were faced with even greater difficulties than the British in raising new millions for education because, at Mahatma Gandhi's prompting, they were pledged to prohibition, which meant not only foregoing millions from existing tax revenues but finding additional money to enforce the law. "What to do?" In the words of Messrs. Nurullah and Naik, "a way out of this dilemma became obvious when Mahatma Gandhi came forward with the proposal that the plans for mass education need not be held up for want of funds and that universal, compulsory, and free primary education of seven years could be given to every child if the process of schooling could be made self-supporting by imparting education through a useful and productive craft".

From this it would seem reasonable to argue that there were two fundamental differences between Pandeji's approach to handicrafts and the Mahatma's approach : (1) Pandeji was trying wholly to solve an educational problem, whereas the Mahatma was trying partly to solve an economic problem ; and (2) in Pandeji's scheme handicrafts were not exclusive of, but complementary to, what, for want of a better term, may be called academic subjects. Pandeji considered crafts as useful in developing (a) coordination between brain and muscle; (b) skill in the use of the hands, which tranquillises nervous, and re-invigorates normal, temperaments; (c) a recreational hobby; (d) in combating the widely prevalent idea that handwork is menial or undignified. (It may be noted in passing that the *Thakur* class of boys from Shekhawati was particularly prone to this attitude and that strong attempts, to which Pandeji was placidly and successfully adamant, were made to exempt them from compulsory handwork); (e) in developing the individual's creative and artistic qualities; and (f) as a possible means of providing a

profession for the future.

Now, we may at once concede that the orthodox upholders of the "Wardha Scheme" would certainly agree with these points and claim them as part of their scheme. But there is a difference in the emphasis of, and in the results produced by, a scheme *which makes crafts work the medium of all instruction,* and, above all, in a scheme which, by definition, must be governed by economic rather than educational considerations. For students to sell their products at a profit, they need to study markets rather than knowledge for its own sake. Success in a commercial venture requires that goods should be produced by skilled workers in response to Demand, not in accordance with educational objectives by workers, the majority of whom must *ex hypothesi* always be apprentices.

The Pilani Basic Education School was planned as a new colony for boys from the surrounding villages, and an "ideal village" atmosphere was created by housing it in thatched huts, in which both boys and teachers lived. Ground was donated for agriculture, because one of the objects was to encourage the study of improved agriculture and the analysis of soils by growing the cotton or other raw materials necessary for school use.

All the knowledge imparted was linked to a craft. For example : the growing of cotton involved studies of the climates and countries where cotton grows; cotton industries; carding, ginning, spinning, weaving and dyeing; the making and marketing of clothes, etc. The main crafts used in the Pilani experiment were : spinning and weaving, paper making and marbling, cardboard making, and book binding. Carpentry received less time because of the difficulty and expense of obtaining the right timber, and of the skill required to make really saleable articles, such as furniture. The products of the school were sold : they earned about 20 per cent of the school's annual expenditure, after a charge to the parents of Re. 1/8 per day per boy per month, had been deducted for expenses.

The scheme was also tried in various village schools, and everywhere educational aims found themselves restricted by practical difficulties. For example, schools had to be apportioned rigid monthly quotas of *newar* (webbing for plaiting *charpoys*) and of *dhurries* (mats) in order to ensure that the raw materials supplied were used by the schools for the benefit of the pupils, and did not find themselves mysteriously

chanelled into black markets for the benefit of parents or even complete outsiders. But the contribution of the schools' sales to the cost of their upkeep was negligible, far below the 20 per cent achieved by the sale of handicrafts made in the model Basic School.

The Pilani teachers launched the school with sympathy and enthusiasm but truth compels one to report that the time came when they began to think of the handicraft work as "that bottle-neck". There was so much going on in the world that was not obviously connected with any craft which it was possible to fit into a seven day week that the boys themselves complained about the limitations and gaps in their syllabus. As already mentioned, the school was not self-supporting, and in this the Trust did not fail where others have succeeded, but where all have failed.

The boys of the Basic School found themselves in perpetual contrast with students receiving another type of education; they felt themselves the objects of a cranky experiment, compelled to be "different", and many grumbled that they were being exploited rather than educated. When, after the war had broken out, the naval engineering centre was opened in Pilani, there was a spontaneous and general exodus to the new centre.

And so the Basic School closed down. The experience should not be regarded as a total loss, for a valuable contribution to progress in all arts and sciences is made by those who take time and trouble to prove that some widely canvassed solution for a current problem is in fact a blind alley, and that fresh thinking is therefore required.

VISITS TO RURAL SCHOOLS

HERE ARE EXTRACTS from letters that Lora wrote to me from Pilani :—

Canal Koti,
November, 1951.

On Monday, Pandeji and I set out in the Trust jeep, more or less across country, to see two rural schools.

After bouncing down an allegedly "first class" track, we took to the wilds, shooting through sand drifts and crossing fields quite dried up and derelict. In an effort to get into a deeply sunk track at the edge of one of these, we had to charge a bank twice in order to surmount it before we took a plunge that reminded me of stag hunting across Somerset lanes.

Soil erosion here and there, and *ank* growing green and lusty, stems cut and lying in places to dry for their fibre. Finally we got to a collection of thatched huts approached through a system of thorn hedges designed to lead the cattle home safely past cultivation. We had been directed by a herdsman who had pointed across the hummocky plain and shouted to our enquiry : *"Ek kos ! Ek kos !"* (two miles) while his flock all but disappeared in panic.

First down, and then up, a track so narrow that our four wheels *all* ran in the bordering hedges, brought us to a long, low brick edifice on the edge of a sandy playground, with another low building beyond. Some little gardens had been prepared, rather obviously for our benefit only, as most were brand new in the act of being prepared. But there is a farm nearby where the boys learn the elements of agriculture and some theory. It is mainly garden, and not a stock-rearing concern, I understand.

A guard of honour of two lines of boys were drawn up at the gate (a gap in the hedge). Fine masculine little boys, medium and large they seemed, and they gave us a very smart salute, as Pande and I proceeded down between them. It was a middle school : boys from 8-15 ; about 200 in all. Those from remoter villages sleep in a dormitory on the far side of the playground. This was a pleasant hut in peasant style with a thatched roof ; ventilation in the form of alternate brickwork was built into the walls at intervals between the thirty or forty beds. Concrete shelves in the walls between the beds held the tin boxes in which the pupils store all their personal belongings. The bed covers were of local *khadi*.

We saw the classes at work (a row of shoes outside each classroom), and heard one or two boys read. The equipment consisted exclusively of the little cases or satchels the boys bring, which hold their books. These books they provide themselves, and they write on their knees, on slates or little boards, while they squat on the floor. In the top classrooms, there were one or two maps. The master had a chair and table in each room.

I was very struck by the eager pleasant faces of most of the boys, and the evident smell of cleanliness, so easily recognisable. The earth floors were cool and not dusty. Some of the biggest boys seemed so full of that simple kind of personality one associates with country people the world over that I asked what the boys were destined for when they

left school. Out of the top class last year, about twenty-five took the Passing Out Examination and all passed. About half the boys return to their farms in the surrounding countryside; about one quarter go into the army, as there is a great military tradition in the whole of Rajputana; and the other quarter go to various professions such as teachers, pleaders, *babus* in businesses in nearby towns. In the banyan-tree-village school I told you about,* the man who showed us round was a clerk in the Birla Engineering College and walked in to Pilani every day.

We went out to a chair and table placed in the shade, and some boys did a little drill, and two little fellows sang in turn while a master played on an Indian harmonium. The first song was a patriotic song, the opening words of which I was told by Pandeji were: "Triumph! Who can overcome India? No one!" The second was well sung by a boy with a loud unselfconscious voice, who read the words from a book while he sang.

I thought that this might be of interest, because I had heard that the tradition of folk song had remained unbroken in Rajasthan, and that it was as alive today as ever before. Recognising the words "Tom Dick and Harry" in the song, I knew that I must be listening to something at least as modern as the British occupation, so I asked for a translation. I was wondering what sort of things they would consider to be of educational value, suitable for school use. I found that it was designed to impress the children with local traditions and with the names and deeds of heroes and saints. It is an exhortation. Very little logic and no sense at all—just *panache*: flourish and fanfare. The singer's straight back, and his loud voice, testified to its significance in his young life. I secured a literal translation which I have tried to make readable:

Coming events cast their shadows before:
All the world knows that cowards are beaten, and
All the world sings of heroes.
See! Shankara renounced the world in childhood;
He remained unmarried, but destroyed all darkness.
The other Shankara went in search of Shiva;
See! His soul became sublime and he joined the company of sages.
All the world says that Dayanand destroyed falsehood.

Father! Thou wilt say that Bhagat Singh is joking,
But what hast thou sown and reaped in the fields?

* See page 127.

Father ! Thou hast merely sown pulses, and millet, maize and gram.
But why didst thou not sow pistols, dear father ?
All the world says that the enemy must be fought with metal.

Guru Gobind Singh was a child when he worked miracles.
He told his father that he should sacrifice his life for his country,
And later he sacrificed his own children.
The Saint Banda never retreated upon his chosen path
All the world narrates stories of heroic martyrs.

Destiny destroys even kith and kin.
Even Bismal could not get water when they hanged him.
The work of Destiny wove an immortal legend :
A woman Laxmi Bai became Maharani of Jhansi.
Mother ! All the world says that she was a heroine.

Destiny gave a child to the house of Janki Nath.
Mother Parbhati reared the sapling carefully,
Herself applied the blood mark on the forehead of Durga.
All the world says that Destiny is the handmaid of heroes.

As difficult as it is to hide the fragrance of the breast,
So the fire in the heart of a patriot can never be quenched.
Poetry is not for every Tom, Dick, and Harry,
But thy poetry, O Bisham, is sung by all the world.

The tune was very impressive, simple, catchy, with a recurring refrain and a very marked rhythm. It had all the minor hauntingness of so many of their songs, and was so reminiscent that I was not satisfied until at last it dawned upon me that it might have been the model for Rimski-Korsakoff's Schéhérezade theme (the one that goes ta-ta-taa, ta-ta-taa, ta-ta-taa-taa, ta-ta-ta-, ta-ta-ta-ta-taa.)

The individual who made the most impression upon me amongst the masters was a "foine oppstandin' mun" from the army, who drilled the boys for our benefit. I thought that the only boys who had the least idea what they were doing were the scouts, of which there is a troop. I suspect that that item also was for our benefit alone. This man pushed himself in all the time, and I found that I was always next him. On looking back, I realise that it was my inexperience in such situations that prevented me from spotting quickly that I should have insisted on talking to the headmaster, who was always there, just a little to the side. I must beware of that sort of thing. I suspect that the "foine oppstandin' mun" was not a master at all; merely a villager on leave who had been roped in to add spit and polish to the show.

This school was a very pleasant experience; the whole village turned out in force because I was the first European

to set foot in it. A wonderful batch of "rude forefathers" were presented at the end and we got a photo of one aged 88, as straight and upright as a ramrod; a complete piece of old Hindusthan, beard, bearing of truculence mingled with respect, ancient-cut garments and all. They told us that when he was young he could lift 10 maunds* and carry it on his head.

My back started to play up again on account of the jeep jolts, and I doubt if I shall be able to make the long trip to Bhiwani. I might be laid out and have to stay in the factory for a couple of weeks!

After some very black tea and some toffee sweets, consumed in the shade of the original little temple upon whose grounds the school was built, we embarked again in the Trust's uncapsizable jeep across a sea of furrows, ditches, hedges, tracks, between scampering flocks and cheering children who all took to the highest vantage points as if we might attack them. For a time we carried with us a 16-year old youth as guide. He was delighted to get a ride in the jeep. His shining eyes, fine teeth, loud voice, big feet, and free manner, gave me the impression of virility and independence which I now associate with these people, and my heart warmed to him.

After passing several wells, dwellings and herds, we struck sheer across a sandy patch in the wheel tracks of the "election *wallahs*". These we had heard of at the school because they had commandeered some of the boys to go and help illiterate villagers to make their votes properly. I forebore to ask which Party was doing this; but perhaps that was unnecessary. Maybe it really was the right authority, and maybe the votes really would go into the various ballot boxes and not only into one.

After sampling this selection of local institutions and observing the inhabitants of Marwar in their native habitat, I am not surprised at their success among the devitalised masses in India's cities. These rustic Marwaris have bones, intelligence, and vitality. Their carriage is superbly erect : the children are often beautiful; they are *racée;* they all sing : prayers, ballads, and modern songs in which local and national heroes figure by name, showing that their traditional culture is living. They're a good investment!

* See footnote on page 201.

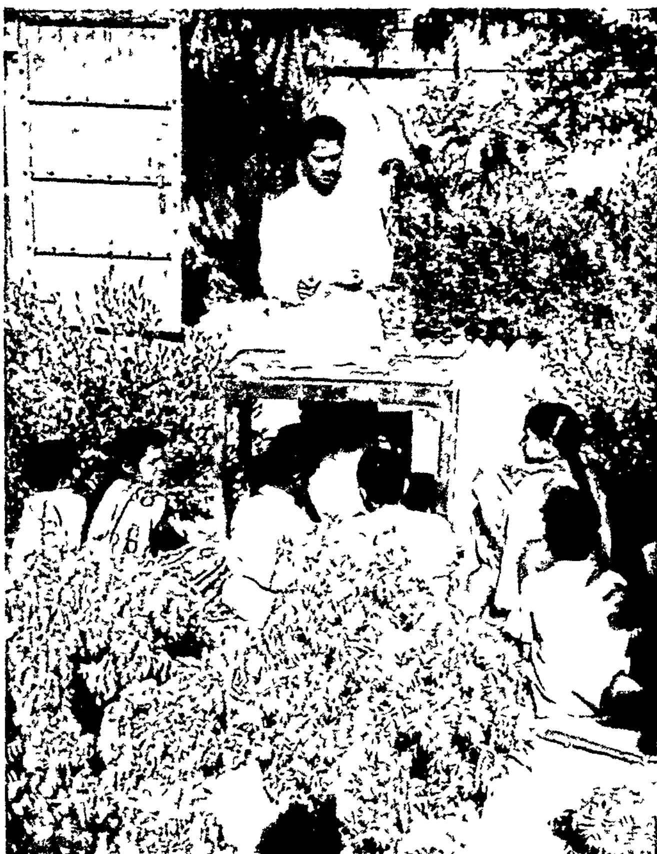
55. One of three tanks in Pilani's "Place de la Concorde".
See page 43



56. A Birla primary school Compare this picture with No 3



57. Sarda, the daughter of Sri Narayanlal Budakia, a shopkeeper who lives on the outskirts of Pilani. On her way to school in the morning Note (a) "parked" camels, while drivers are at business, and (b) buildings in Rajput style



58 Outdoor class in rural school, Sarda on left



59 Between classes

60 Shyami Mai's school and well. See story on page 131

61 Sumitra Devi teaches village women and girls how to clothe their families See page 144

Town and Rural Teachers' Contrasting Countenances

Gradually I have become aware of a type of countenance amongst the masters in these village schools. A very pleasant, agreeable relaxed kind of expression. I wonder what its causes may be? Some kind of security perhaps. I can think of several possibilities. But after my visits to the schools in Pilani town itself, I could almost swear that it does not exist to the same degree in them, neither among the highly qualified teachers nor the lesser. Perhaps the satisfaction of a close community life, combined with security, and perhaps the fact that in the rural village, the educated schoolmaster is very highly regarded, in fact on a pinnacle. So may be the life of a village schoolmaster has much to recommend it. Those in Pilani itself are surrounded by competition and perplexities and politics, and are all no doubt suffering from their small pay.

PILANI TOWN SCHOOLS

The First Pathshala

The little pathshala, where G. D. Birla had his first schooling, is in a dusty court off a street adjacent to the Birla *havely*. It is just another stone-built alcove of cavernous aspect, with agreeable proportions and pillared arches, like so many other buildings here. There is some great tradition in architecture which they all follow. Its simplicity suggests that it is Moghul rather than Hindu. A few scrubby little girls, and an affable woman were working there. We did not stay long, but I got two good snaps.

I understand that Pandeji often appoints the teachers of these smaller schools himself, choosing older women, who themselves live in the district and are likely to stay there. He talks to them a lot and encourages them to visit parents and get to understand the children's homes and gradually to influence them for the better. It must be most unusual to have so many social worker school teachers in one town and all guided by so wise a hand.

The "Cottage" School

The Pilani school I am now describing was started by Pandeji for the inhabitants of this low-caste section of the town. This was one of the places where he got a man to

play a drum, and put up the swings. Now, there is a nice little low-built school of the same simplicity as the village one, all primary classes. There were flourishing children's gardens in the playground and the local people, who are all very poor, peered through the fences at either end. It is a poor part of the town, but the school ground is all clean and the paths edged with whitewashed brick. Two or three little tots were reading, both girls and boys, superintended by the usual masters who always look mild and bitter. Four children were told to sing. They put their hands together as for prayer, and set off loudly, but getting gradually flatter and flatter and faster and faster till almost nothing but breath was coming out of their mouths. Twice the teacher attempted to stop them but they went right on with their eyes fixed before them. Their song was a prayer for strength and wisdom. Armyn and Aminta were much impressed. Here, the children all sat on the bare floor and wrote on slates or boards, on their knees, as in the village schools.

The Kothi School

The next school was a big brick building in a nice garden full of little plots. It is rented from a townsman. This school is well equipped in elementary school style, and the children all sit at desks and use many books. They do crafts of several sorts. We saw boys spin on the little Gandhi wheels, and saw the mats that they had woven. Earthenware pots which they had decorated lay in a corner of the Craft shed. These they use to build up into a ceremonial gateway upon ceremonial occasions. There was clay modelling of a very simple kind, mostly *copying* fruit and inkpots! The paintings, at least those that were hung up, were of the usual high standard in *execution* that I have learned to expect, but the uniformity of their treatment was noticeable. Nevertheless, it really must be true that Rajput children have some special artistic capacity. I chose one of the pictures which was remarkable for a 10 year old. I hope I shall be allowed to keep it. The classrooms were full, and the apparatus old and worn, but the walls were covered with pictures and designs in paper cutting by the boys. Here, they have a very geometrical approach to design, which, I remember being told by the art teacher at the Caldecot Community, is the *only* approach. But their traditional designs must instil a faculty for this kind of thing into Indian children,

because Devaki Amma tells me that any of her girls can get down on the floor and make in colour one of those elaborate designs which you saw at the Vidyapeeth, without any trial sketching or planning. They have practised and studied them since early childhood. Copying, tradition, reproducing, seem to me to characterise the Art work of these schools—not creation and originality.

The other little Primary Schools that we saw were just a few children together with one or two young teachers. One thing stuck in my memory—that each school had at least a *laige* court for playground, and most had good sized playgrounds for organised games.

Boys' Middle School

This school is a memorial to Swami Charan Das, one of the oldest members of its advisory Committee. Pandeji persuaded him that the fittest memorial was to found a school. So the Swami gave the building, as well as adjacent land for a football field, and the children work in rather small rooms under an ornate roof with statues upon it, connected with the memorial. It was an ordinary sort of school; nothing in particular, but all quite adequate. The teachers do look very humble and depressed and cold. More bitter and less mild in this school !

The Girls' Sewing School

The girls' school we next visited—the Janike Mundeliar Mehla Sudan—specialised in sewing, embroidery, weaving, and the making of clothes, also knitting and toy-making. The little girls are all trained to do the usual things, and the work was of a very high standard. It may be that all the best things were got out to show us, but they were really excellent. Certainly I have never seen girls do anywhere else such beautiful work as they do in the Vidyapeeth and here. This little Pilani school has classes for the village women most afternoons, and they can use its sewing machines, and learn how to clothe their families. I am going to ask Pandeji if I can attend some of these classes, and see the women at work. The two teachers in charge were such nice, cheerful people. I hope to get them to tea along with some others I have got to know. and have a ladies' tea.

A Return Visit To The Sewing School

I entered the big court which serves as playground, down two adjacent sides of which run school buildings, and found a few little girls still repeating lessons in one of the smaller rooms, while others were fetching a drink from the covered-in well head. I suppose I remember this detail because the cool clink of shining metal mugs on stone, and the dripping of water, is such a grateful sound in India.

Mounting the stone steps to enter the large shady arcade which forms the main classroom, I found three sewing machines on the floor, and about fifteen young women seated on *dhurries* sewing or knitting around the machines. Most of them had babies or young children asleep across their knees. While machines purred, needles clicked, and tongues wagged, the toddlers roamed about between us all.

The intricacy and beauty of the knitting being worked by these charming young women for their babies' jackets, or their own blouses, was entirely in keeping with all the work I saw: not one simple stitch was being worked amongst them!

Upon the walls were numerous examples of the work done in this little room. There were cross stitch, traditional Rajasthani stitches, glass work on samplers, blouses, bags and cushions, as well as flower embroidery on mats and tablecloths. There were sets of clothes in miniature for an entire Indian family—*kurtas, kamises, jodhpurs, chowlis, salwars,* and *atchkans,* as well as babies' garments, all like dolls' clothes in a toy shop; these are models from which the women may learn how to make clothes for their families. There were stuffed toys, woven mats, knitted jumpers, and countless other articles, made by the women and girls who had passed through the hands of Sumitra Devi, the teacher. As I sat beside her at her desk, working out a Rajasthani stitch which I had admired on a village woman's skirt, I was able to have a bird's-eye-view of my companions, because my small bit of *dusuti* was more often in Sumitra Devi's hand for correction than it was in mine. The unbelievable amount of time and trouble that is put into a *gagara* border, five and a half yards long and two and a half inches wide, comprising five different coloured materials, can only be taken by people who have nothing else to do and who can do nothing else—in other words, the caste of traditional embroiderers. There comes to my mind the happy smile and contented expression

of the old woman who settled herself for some days on my verandah at Canal Kothi, determined to sell me the skirt border that she was completing. She was ignorant, she was illiterate, but she was an artist and experienced an artist's satisfaction.

As it happened most of the young women beside me this afternoon were not peasants but the wives of the younger schoolmasters of Pilani; nevertheless, most of them also wore satisfied expressions as they sat cross-legged at the machines, one with a heavy boy dead asleep across her knees, another much distracted by a gay little tot who sat herself down and wanted to wind the machine handle. With laughter and perfect good nature, the others tried to attract the little one's attention, with the result that it toddled off to throw itself over the edge of the verandah. A concerted rush saved her, but there was continual diversion and miniature laughter bubbling in that corner for half the afternoon until at last the little scamp was exhausted and slept where she sank. The rest of the women worked quietly, with their sleeping babies on their knees; one nursed her's while she worked. Some were knitting their winter jerseys. I am always interested by the colours Indian women choose—not one primary colour amongst them—all olives, maroons, mauves and rusts. Nor could the stitches be in any way described as primary. I saw at least five different complicated patterns each requiring a three to six-row figure.

The sun crept round, and huge patches of burning light fell through the arches onto the bent heads and the sleeping children nearest to the court. As our work continued through the sleepy part of the heat, machines and children had to be moved laboriously into the shade.

Gradually the children awoke and sat up yawning and shiny-eyed, and the tirling* of the machines ceased. Then we had a session of mutual admiration for children, shirts, embroidery, and knitting stitches, and so departed to our homes.

* An Onomatopoeic word from the Scots J. H

THE RURAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

IN THE YEARS before 1935, a dozen village schools were opened. The table below shows subsequent progress :

B. E. T. RURAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SCHOOLS
1935 to 1950

Years	No. of Schools	No. of Teachers	No. of Students
1935	13	—	262
1936	21	23	729
1937	33	39	1,205
1938	93	117	3,669
1939	124	171	5,338
1940	130	181	5,660
1941	144	223	6,967
1942	155	204	6,549
1943	287	328	10,034
1944	337	409	12,816
1945	395	481	15,063
1946	318	417	12,954
1947	268	378	11,870
1948	239	343	10,486
1949	223	358	11,215
1950	163	268	8,389

When it is recalled that, as mentioned in chapter V, Jaipur state refused to allow any primary school to be founded without permission, and that no teacher drawing a salary of Rs. 15/- a month or over could be employed unless a District Magistrate certified that he was a state subject, the figures in the table suggest the Trust's refusal to be daunted by these obstacles. Even when the strict letter of the law was fulfilled, the state authorities often made the life of the local teacher miserable, and a new school was apt to die before it was born. It was not so much that Jaipur was against education itself, as it feared the spread of "new ideas" by the notorious Birla institutions, those "hotbeds of sedition". Pilani is, however, a border village near the boundaries of Bikaner, Jind, Patiala, Nabha, and the Punjab, and this enabled Pandeji to execute a neat side-step out of Jaipur's clutches by opening schools across the border. The table shows the numbers creeping up, until suddenly in 1942-43, there is a steep jump of 132 from 155 to 287; this was the year in which Sir Mirza Ismail raised the Jaipur portcullis, and in which Professor H. R. Bhatia was appointed head of

the Rural Education Department with orders to steam full speed ahead. Half a dozen supervisors were appointed and schools were to be started wherever a demand existed or could be created, the sole provisos being that no two schools should exist within a radius of three miles of each other (this compares with an average of six miles in West Bengal), and that each village school should build its own school house and a dwelling for the teacher.

The increased *tempo* of the educational drive in the villages naturally brought a busy Rural Educational Department head office into existence in Pilani. Some villages formed delegations which walked or rode dusty miles into Pilani to invade the office with requests for schools. Professor Bhatia recalls their rustic manner and speech, the *lathis* that they characteristically carried, and their forthright way of pressing their demands. And as often as not a village head man would precede or follow the delegation at a discreet interval to urge the Professor *not* to start a school "because educated people play mischief with simple village folk". Thus did the head man foresee and fear the end of his supremacy as the sole representative of authority, purveyor of news, and interpreter of official documents and ukases in the village.

The year 1945 saw the Department's peak with 395 schools, 481 teachers, and 15,063 students, involving the Trust in an annual expenditure of Rs. 2 lakhs. These schools were supervised by eight inspectors with offices as wide apart as Delhi, Khetri, Chirawa, Sikar, Mukandgarh, Reengus, Sanganer, and Pilani.

The direction of so many schools involved heavy staff work. Monthly reports from schools, and reports from supervisors and inspecting staff of the *thikanas* and the states, had to be scrutinised and classified. The correspondence was substantial, especially since salaries had to be sent to each small village by money order. Government departments in no country show alacrity and elasticity in adapting themselves to new conditions and the Indian Posts & Telegraphs Department took time to realise that Pilani had ceased to be one of those more dead than alive holes in the wilderness of Shekhawati where two clerks could cope with the traffic, one to sleep and another to see that no one disturbed his sleep. Because the post office was not authorised to issue money orders of greater value than Rs. 30/-, the Rural Education Department had to send two money orders where one

would have sufficed, and at one time more than 600 were being dispatched every month. If this imposed a strain on the Department the strain on the two (now sleepless) clerks in the post office was greater. But they did their best, until eventually (about the time that the Department's work was reduced by about three-quarters) additional clerks were sanctioned. Money orders, caught up in the rural post offices' meditative processes, were not infrequently delayed, sometimes so long that they were returned unpaid—the intended recipient having been transferred to another school or to a better world—so that there was much follow-up work.

To maintain the records of so many schools and teachers was a sizeable job, but Professor Bhatia and his assistants were a happy team; they prided themselves on the various labour-saving methods of organisation that they thought up; and the work had its compensations as, for example, when Professor Bhatia received a telegram from a teacher: "Things going from bad to worse, send one seer of soya beans", or again: "Wife died send substitute leaving today".

The people of the countryside became steadily more co-operative. Village committees collected funds to build schools, organise tournaments, "special days", and prize distributions, and insisted on ceremonial inspections from the Rural Education Department as excuses for *burra tamashas.* By 1951, school buildings valued at over Rs. 4,20,000/- had been erected. All this was encouraging, but the more that the Trust did, the more the public expected it to do. An ever widening circle was set in motion. Effort and enthusiasm on the part of public bodies and of the Department led to expansion and to increase in educational facilities and equipment; primary schools wanted to become lower middle schools, and lower middle schools wanted to become middle schools. Wherever the Department managed to persuade people to send their children to school, numbers snowballed upwards. This meant still more staff, more equipment, more supervision, and always more money. Since the Trust was soon fully committed on the Department, to which it made an annual grant greater than to any other of its institutions, the only solution was to rely ever increasingly on the goodwill and enthusiasm of volunteers.

The Department provided a certain number of battery radio sets, and in accordance with its policy of promoting self-help, it encouraged the villages to club together to subscribe for these sets as for other amenities and improvements.

In addition to the extra-curricular activities common to most schools, religious meetings were organised by teachers at several places and the *Ramayana* was recited. After the declaration of Independence, and again after Gandhiji's murder, a wave of emotion spread over the countryside, and the Department seized the occasions to distribute copies of Gandhiji's post-prayer speeches and *Bhajans,* Premchand's stories, *Gita Pravachan,* and the *Ramayan,* which were read at school and village gatherings.

The Department supplied a weekly periodical to every school, but the more enterprising themselves clubbed together to subscribe to daily newspapers from which the teachers read to them.

The Department owned some fifty travelling libraries, each with more than one hundred and fifty books, including fiction, gardening, social reform, health, sanitation, etc., which moved from school to school and were in good demand by teachers, pupils, and villagers. These libraries were eventually made over to the schools to keep, as it was felt that if they had a nucleus of their own books they would take greater care of them and would have an incentive to add to them themselves. Today there are twenty middle schools each of which boasts a library ranging from five hundred to one thousand books, to which additions are regularly made.

The village schools, under the Trust's control, are centres of social life as well as education. Not only do the teachers discuss practical questions arising out of the villagers' daily problems but they also preach *katha* to them on religious occasions. Inter-school functions are common.

The teachers in these village schools vary in ability and in ambition, but the Department does its best to ensure that they are men with a vocation. Professor Bhatia, who remained head of the Department until he left Pilani in 1952 to take up a government appointment in New Delhi, claimed that it was evidence of the spirit of his primary school teachers that most were always ready to coach outside the scheduled hours those of their pupils who were ambitious to go on to middle schools. This work they did for its own sake because none of their charges could afford to pay for extra tuition. "Many of our teachers", he asserted, "have become important members of the village community and help to mould its social, religious, and economic life".

During the ten years that the Professor was in charge, he received, from educationists who heard of the Birla Education

Trust's large-scale rural enterprises, many requests for details of the syllabus and methods employed; some enthusiasts even came to make personal investigations on the spot. But all these enquirers were loud in the expression of their disappointment when they discovered that "experimental methods" were not being tried out. "What ? No new ideas ! Still stuck in the same old rut !"

The Department was not against new ideas, but its first difficulty was that the great expansion of its rural work took place during World War II, while the army, navy, air force, the civil services, and industry, were simultaneously expanding. India's fighting forces eventually passed the 2,000,000 mark and development in all other spheres was on a similarly vast scale. The result was that the normal peace-time shortage of qualified personnel became a war-time famine. It would have been impossible to find and to train the type of teacher necessary to carry out high-powered fancy schemes. Not only were qualified teachers scarce, but books, maps, furniture, chalks, and writing materials, became difficult to obtain in the quantities needed. At the same time, the nation-wide war expansion had repercussions in the countryside; peasants are not fools and they soon realised the immediate advantages that a knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, gave to men who joined the armed forces, government service, or the rapidly expanding industries.

A number of refresher courses for village teachers were organised during the vacations and Professor Bhatia recalls that they were successful mostly because enthusiasm was great among that younger war-time generation, and because colleagues in the Birla College were ready to help, but these refreshers could not be organised too often, because, apart from the ever rising cost, it was, with rationing in force, difficult to feed a temporary gathering of one or two-hundred people.

But if qualified teachers had been available for fancy schemes, the country-folk would have been indifferent, because it seems probable that one of the chief reasons for the failure of India's multitudes of rural educational theorists to show any spectacular results to date is that they have been trying to force ideas and subjects on villagers who know what they want, and who do not want any "uplift" substitutes. They want the three R's, and they want them for the precise reason that the village uplifter dislikes them, that is, because the three R's enable the ambitious villager, to get away from

the country to the town, while the uplifter's object is to keep him in his village. The Department could not in fact have attempted any spectacular educational experiments because of war-time difficulties and shortages, and Professor Bhatia is satisfied that in providing a conventional curriculum he was in fact meeting the needs of the villagers as they saw them at that time.

It would not, however, be true to imply that the Department worked from day to day with no over-all objective in view. By means of its schools, its extra-curricuar activities, inter-school games, handicrafts, travelling libraries, sing-songs, battery radio sets, religious gatherings, and so on, the Department's objective was to reduce the sheer boredom and monotony of village life that, of itself is the cause of much backwardness, stunted development, superstition, and stagnation.

The table on page 146 shows the full extent of the Trust's pioneer work, but even so it was small in relation to the magnitude of the need for education in Rajputana. The Trust could have gone on spending money without limit on this rural work, but as its funds are not inexhaustible, a balance has to be struck between rural and higher educational objectives. In view of the urgent need for scientists, engineers, and other graduates of higher education in independent India, the Trust felt justified, now that popularly elected ministries would be in control of the backward princely states that were amalgamated into Rajasthan and P.E.P.S.U., in expecting the state to assume full resposibility for primary education. Accordingly the Trust has decreased its rural work by handing the majority of its schools over to the state as going concerns.

The Trust's interest in rural work remains nevertheless substantial and there is no intention of abandoning it. In 1952, the Trust controlled five compulsory primary schools in Pilani for boys, and three for girls; six village middle schools, three lower, and thirty-seven primaries, with a total of 3,033 students.

INTERLUDE:

ON WHITENESS, CLEANNESS, GARDENS AND COOL WATERS

WHEN I read through the first draft of these pages, I was disconcerted by the frequency with which I had applied the adjectives "white" and "clean" to buildings, and I began cutting the words out until I paused to ask myself what impression I had been striving to convey. I reflected that throughout India most buildings in stone are whitewashed or covered with a cream stucco, and that the whiteness is normally discoloured by dirty green blotches and grey-black streaks, while the stucco is crumbling and peeling. This is because one monsoon season is enough to wash off whitewash and to damage stucco and, if they are to be kept looking clean and bright, houses need to be done over every year. The houses of Pilani are among the few buildings in India that are.

Those who live there probably take for granted the freshness of the whitewash, the cleanness of the garden walls, the undiscoloured surfaces of the cement *dhobi* ghats, and well-heads, but they strike the visitor's eye, immediately and constantly, in contrast to the average exterior that, for example, he sees in any part of fashionable Calcutta.

An explanation seems also needed for recurrent references to gardens, shade, fountains, wells, and the cool of waters. Western readers may miss their significance.

To Westerners and Easterners alike, a garden is a place of relaxation. There is an aesthetic pleasure in the velvet greensward of the gardens of New College, or the flower beds of St. John's, Oxford, as there is in the gardens of the Rashtrapati Bhawan*, with their banks of bright-hued flowers, tesselated pavements, pools and fountains, but the fierce hot weather of northern India adds a degree of intensity, a sensation of relief, that is not felt in temperate Europe.

When the eyes have been screwed up all day against the glare, have seen nothing but the greys and browns of dust and parched earth, when the nose, throat, and lungs, have been coated with dust swirling in the hot wind, when the feet have slipped at each step on the earth's powdered surface, when the body has baked day-long with a double skin of sweat and grit—then cooling, grateful, and revivifying indeed, are

* Formerly Viceroy's House, New Delhi, now official residence of the President of the Indian Union.

the sight of shady trees, of green moist ground, of the silver spray of fountains, of waters flowing deep in silent channels, and the sounds of a bucket plopping at the bottom of eighty cool and echoing feet of well, of all manner of waters—slipping and sliding in rustling rills, bursting their way into irrigation ditches, roaring, splashing, and foaming over falls.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MONTESSORI (JUNIOR AND HIGH) SCHOOL

BEFORE CROSSING the threshold of the Birla Montessori School, I pause to ask whether the Trust was happily inspired to bestow upon it a name which, for opposing reasons, cannot fail to arouse the suspicions (a) of Western educational experts, and (b) of the many who distrust ideas and methods with which they are not familiar.

The suspicions of the experts first: Maria Montessori (1869-1951) was among the great educational pioneers of the Western world, but there is no one whose theories date so quickly as those of the pioneer. Consider, for example, the field of Psychology. There is no resemblance between the academic introspection that went by the name of Psychology in the nineteenth century and the practical mental re-education undertaken by a contemporary psychiatrist. The chasm between the old and the new Psychologies was created by Freud's' revelation of the unconscious mind. Nevertheless, a psychologist who proclaims himself a "Freudian" today is apt to re-awaken the antagonisms that Freud's original exposition of his theories encountered: a self-proclaimed "Freudian" will be approached, with the light of battle in their eyes, by all those who have struggled to push the frontiers of knowledge still further forward. But to challenge Freud's conception of sex as mankind's basic motivating instinct does not dispose of his contribution, and to suggest that the Oedipus complex is a reflection of the conditions of Western life rather than a principle of universal application to Asians, Africans, and Europeans alike, does not erase his name from the history of Psychology.

On the other hand, to vary the example, an institution devoted to scientific work would not attract suspicion to its aims and methods if it called itself the Newtonian Institute, because Newton has been dead long enough to be free from the dust of controversy, and nobody would suspect the Institute of using as a class text book his *New Theory About Light and Colours* (1672), with its mistaken views about the length of the band of colours produced at a given distance from the prisms. Everybody would assume that the Institute was merely called after Newton as a tribute to the memory of a great scientist.

As with Freud and Newton, so with Madame Montessori.

Since she published *The Montessori Method* in 1912, and *The Advanced Montessori Method* in 1917, Western educationists have sifted her ideas and tested her methods, so that her real contribution has been merged into the body of contemporary theory and practice. It follows that when the average educationist is asked to explain what the Montessori method is, he is apt to think back to his student days and, remembering first all the criticisms, to dismiss her as the exponent of exploded fallacies. He needs to make an effort to recall that some of the most golden strands woven into the fabric of his own teaching derive from Montessori's ideas.

Such critical reactions to the name of Montessori are less common in India than in the West, first because, for a variety of reasons, Indian educational theory and practice is insufficiently in touch with the latest developments in Western countries ; and, secondly, because Madame Montessori found in India a new and virgin field for her teaching and spent nine out of the last twelve years of her life here.

But as this chapter unfolds, it will, I hope, be clear that the strictures to be found on Montessori's original doctrines in such recent works as William Boyd's *History of Western Education,* or Herbert Read's *Education Through Art,* do not apply to the work being done at Pilani under the headmastership of Mr. Radha Raman.

The foregoing reflections may perhaps cause pain and indignation in Mr. Raman, who worked with Madame Montessori herself for two years in Kodikanal in South India, where he became one of her star students, and was eventually appointed an Examiner to the Montessori courses, and Organising Secretary of the Association Montessori Internationale (India). As is becoming, he has a profound respect and admiration for his great teacher and will hear no word against her. But it seems to me that Mr. Raman is as much a Montessorian as Saint Paul was a Christian. Saint Paul would have repudiated the suggestion that he was modifying the teachings of his Master, but it is probable that the Master would have found much to interest him in the teachings of his disciple, and the phrase "Pauline Christianity" has been coined by those who emphasise the difference between them.

Now, let us consider the second group : those who find Montessori's ideas too far departed from the conventions of

their own childhood. The practical way to allay such misgivings is to read a book on the history of education or an introduction to psychology, such as *Learning and Teaching* by A. G. and E. H. Hughes. Nevertheless, since Montessori's methods are likely to strike many outside the ranks of Western educationists—for example, the average parent in India, who, in this, does not differ from the average parent in many Western countries— as too revolutionary for comfort, I will summarise her basic contribution, which, accepted without dispute by educationists throughout the Western world, forms part of the syllabus of every recognised degree course in teaching, and, it is perhaps worth adding, is not only taught in training schools but practised by Western teachers when they take up their careers.

Modern educational theory stems from Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) which lays down that the teacher's first object should be to study the nature and psychology of the child. Prior to *Emile* educators were essentially concerned with the content of knowledge to be imparted. From the time of *Emile* onwards, educationists increasingly realised that the problem was not how to cram a known and limited body of knowledge, available in a single shelf of books, into an unwilling receptacle known as a child's brain, but how to develop the child's personality so that he will forage for himself in the fields of knowledge, extending his own boundaries until, it may be, he eventually extends the elastic and unclearly marked boundaries of knowledge itself. Although much progress was made towards the solution of this problem, it was limited by the apparent necessity of having to teach in classes, in which inevitably, either the pace was set by the slowest, and the bright child prevented from forging ahead, or the bright child was allowed to set the pace and the medium and slow were neglected, and thus prevented from developing their full capabilities. If only some method could be devised whereby the child could teach himself, he could then use his own creative energies fully without being constantly thwarted by others, whether teachers or pupils.

It was Madame Montessori who first discovered how to do this. She was an Italian doctor who began her career by training mentally defective children by means of sensory apparatus (blocks, pegs, circles, etc.) like that of Edouard Séguin (1812-1880). Her success with defectives led her to ask whether the same methods would not give even better results with children who had all their wits about them.

Thus she discovered two of the fundamental ideas of her system : that the teacher must think of the individual first and that the individual can be developed by means of a graded series of teaching apparatus. "It became evident," writes Dr. Boyd *, "that the methods which enabled the feeble minded children to be educated called out the initiative of the normal children and made them able to educate themselves. And so there came to her two more principles : that education should be self-education, and that the children should be allowed the freedom necessary for this self-education by the substitution of an impersonal directress for the ordinary teacher." Dr. Boyd adds that Montessori's apparatus has had "a most stimulating effect both directly and indirectly over the whole field of education, notably in the teaching of basic subjects like reading and counting, and in art instruction."

A. G. and E. H. Hughes † write : "Compared with the orthodox methods in vogue at the beginning of this century, the Montessori method was revolutionary, especially in its emphasis on the need for individual freedom. Consequently, its aims and methods were often misunderstood and even to this day it is popularly believed that in Montessori schools children do as they like. Nothing could be further from the truth. Social training is a cardinal feature of the method, and one of the most delightful features of a Montessori school is the consideration that its young pupils, of their own free will, give to the needs of others."

Radha Raman Pathak, headmaster of the Birla Montessori Junior and High Schools, is small, frail, sensitive, highly-strung, intelligent, and lives in thrall to children and their problems. He would be oblivious of a riot going on outside his school unless it interfered with his children, in which case he would rise fiercely and go out and quell it, and run quickly back indoors to his interrupted work. No human being can be free of personal problems, but Radha Raman usually solves his own in the way that unanswered letters answer themselves—with the lapse of time, or with some change in circumstances. When, as a student, he was hard up, he solved the problem of getting a meal by going without. Faced with the possibility that he may not be allowed to do something that seems important to him, he gets over the difficulty by doing it first and facing the consequences. For

* W Boyd, *History of Western Education*, p 406
† *Teaching and Learning*, p 378

him, needless to say, "something important" means anything to do with education.

Radha Raman was born in 1917 into a family of teachers. The word *Pathak* means a teacher. Although his father was a railway official in Moradabad, his grandfather ran a boys' school, and it was he who took him when he was only a year old to bring him up. Mr. Raman's grandmother still lives with him and helps in the care of her six great-grandchildren. So it came about that schools were Mr. Raman's childhood formative environment, and ideas about schooling coloured his first impressions of life. His earliest memories are all the same: he is sitting on a chair in the school office beside his grandfather's desk watching the business of the school, and hearing the problems of children, teachers, and parents discussed.

Although his grandfather hoped that he would be a doctor and got as far as putting his name down for the medical school at Agra University, Mr. Raman knew that he was going to be a teacher. With him, teaching has been a vocation in the religious sense of the term. At what he vaguely describes as a "very early age," he persuaded the owner of a tenement building to let him have a couple of rooms in which to open a school.

In due course, he went to college in Kanpur, where he became secretary to the U. P. Students Union. He took his B. A. in 1939 in History, Economics, and Literature.

Every public-spirited Indian—whether political worker or educationist—is sooner or later involved in some attempt to cope with the problem of rural education, and Raman was no exception. During his vacations from the University he used to cycle out to a village named Kundanpur, five miles from Moradabad. This was near enough to a town for the villagers to be deeply suspicious of townsfolk who, in their experience, sought them out only to patronise or to defraud them. The young Raman's difficulties were different from those that Pandeji encountered in Shekhawati where the villages, in an area remote from "civilisation", had less reason to be suspicious of townsmen; besides, Pandeji was already a mature adult, not a young undergraduate, nervous and as yet unsure of himself. Raman set up his school under the banyan tree, but nobody came. The village elders forbade the children to have anything to do with the stranger from the town. This would have been enough for the average college social worker who is apt to

show off his superior wisdom in the villages and to boast on his return to the city of all the fine "regenerative" work that he is doing. But Radha Raman responded to the challenge. He had not only to overcome the material difficulties presented to him from outside, but the difficulties created for him by his own diffident temperament. Even today after fifteen years of travel, teaching, and study abroad, when he has the confidence of experience and maturity, he remains shy in manner. His instinctive shrinking from self-assertion is only overcome if some educational matter crops up in the conversation : then the flame of his spirit kindles him into speech or action, regardless of the possible consequences for himself.

So when no one attended his school under the tree, Raman, embarrassed but undefeated, followed the herds' boys and their flocks into the fields, and at midday, when they all collect in the shade of the trees for respite from the vertical sun, he would sit on the ground with them, and show them pictures, hoping to awaken their interest in things outside their immediate experience. It was too hot to flee or to argue, so they looked, and gradually they lost a little of their fear of this dangerous townsman.

But still, tackling herds' boys, one or two at a time in the sleepy hours of the day, could at best be regarded as a somewhat dispersed effort, and Raman persisted in trying to get classes going in the village itself. He hammered a nail into the banyan tree and hung up a blackboard. Villagers and children did indeed collect—to jeer and heckle. The highly strung boy stood his ground. He reassured himself by the thought that he was making progress, for at least the villagers were not indifferent to him ; he had their concentrated attention ! And because the cause of education was at stake, he found words to answer them. He used their jeers and taunts to set their minds at work ; he shouted back at them, not in bad temper, but in the excitement of the argument ; and because he was alert and interested, he interested them. It took him three months to win their complete confidence.

From Raman's point of view, this *pastorale* was largely an experiment in his own self-education, but it bore wider fruit. His stray pupils, gathered together from the fields, formed the nucleus of a school which has remained in existence ever since. And from his time in Kundanpur dates what he calls his Banyan Tree Plan for the education of the countryside.

The Plan's aim is to utilise local resources and as far as possible to avoid seeking help outside the village. Thus, since in most parts of India, the climate, the monsoon months excepted, allows people to sit out in the open, Mr. Raman would build no school but would use a tree as a rallying point. He would organise teachers' training courses and call for volunteers from the villagers to be trained; and he would hope to create satisfying openings for the disconsolate widows upon whom custom enforces an aimless life; from an economic viewpoint these women are drones; they have to be fed and housed but they are not allowed to make any real contribution to society in return. Nor would Mr. Raman spend money on expensive equipment, books, slates, pens, pencils, desks and chairs, when the children can do their writing and arithmetic on the baked earth. Mr. Raman does not deny that such Banyan Tree students would suffer handicaps in comparison with those in richer schools, but he points out that his plan at least provides an answer to those who fold their arms and say that nothing can be done for lack of money; his plan at least organises the villagers' own initiative, and enables a start to be made. Above all such money as would have to be found would be spent on the most necessary and valuable item in education—the training of teachers.

During these early years, the young Raman snatched at every means of widening his knowledge of his chosen profession. After Mahatma Gandhi had launched his Wardha Scheme, in 1937, everybody began talking about rural education, handicrafts, and spinning. Mr. Raman was among the great majority of teachers who had never done any such work and he joined the comparatively small number who made serious efforts to master the teaching of handicrafts. Not content with a nodding acquaintance, he attended 'the Government Cottage Industries' Institute in Delhi, and, finishing a five year course in two years, he obtained a "first class" qualification as a Textile Engineer in Dyeing, Printing, and Hosiery.

Insatiable in the pursuit of education, Raman earned his living by day as a teacher (for which he received the large sum of Rs.40/- a month); in the evenings he attended handicraft classes; and every weekend he travelled to Moradabad (a 200 mile return journey) to supervise his tenement school whose numbers had now risen tenfold. For this the owner of the tenement paid him Rs. 15/- a month.

In 1941, Mr. Raman took his three months' Happy School Training in Montessori methods that Mr. Padam Chand gave in evening classes for teachers. When Lora met Mr. Raman in Pilani in 1951, he reminded her that ten years earlier she had been President of the Committee of Mr. Padam Chand's School.

"How on earth did you know?" she asked.

For answer he produced his Happy School Teacher's Diploma with her signature upon it.

Looking at Radha Raman's shrewd smiling face, as, with that mixture, so peculiarly his own, of unselfconscious sweetness of nature and impish amusement, he told me something of his story, I thought it fortunate that the Rs. 5/- that he spent *per month* on food in those pre-war Moradabad days, had in fact so little to support. If his body had been less wraith-like or his spirit less ardent, surely he would have faded away. The only thing that he got free was his weekly trip to Moradabad because of his father's railway connexion.

After the war had broken out, there was constant expansion in the departments of the Government of India. Hundreds and hundreds were taken on at comfortable salaries. Mr. Raman replied to an advertisement of a vacancy, was interviewed and appointed on a salary of Rs. 750/- a month, or nearly fourteen times what he was then earning. But as the date on which he was to join up drew near, he was offered a teaching post in Alwar at Rs. 70/- a month and he also heard that the Birla Education Trust was expanding its rural work. He turned down the Alwar opening because it looked a conventionally routine teaching job without scope for the Montessori method to which he had been converted by Mr. Padam Chand. But what he heard in educational circles about Pandeji sounded exciting. Out of the blue, he wrote to Pandeji to ask if there was a rural school vacancy for him. Pandeji invited him to Pilani for an interview, the upshot of which was that he was appointed headmaster of the Kothi School on Rs. 65/- a month. So, goodbye to New Delhi and riches, and off to the Shekhawati sand dunes and a modest living on the outer ridges of remoteness.

Not long after his arrival in Pilani, Pandeji gave his new assistant leave on full pay to attend the fifteen months' Montessori course under Madame Montessori herself at Kodikanal, at the end of which she wrote to Pandeji asking if Mr. Raman could be spared to take the advanced course.

Eventually, as already mentioned, he emerged as Examiner of the Montessori courses, and Organising Secretary of the Montessori Association.

When, in 1944, Mahatma Gandhi invited Madame Montesssori to give a demonstration of her methods, she chose Mr. Raman for the purpose, and he was an eye-witness of an exchange between the two, each leaders in their different worlds, that deserves to be recorded as a footnote to the history of education. The Mahatma suggested to Madame Montessori that she ought to adapt her apparatus to India's particular needs to which she replied politely but with firm finality:

"I am not a tailor. I have produced the cloth. If you want to wear it in a special way in India, it is for your teachers to cut it according to their taste."

This remark suggests that Madame Montessori herself was not a "Montessorian", that, in other words, she had sufficient greatness to realise that others would come after her who would develop her ideas and adapt her methods.

In 1949, the Trust granted Mr. Raman leave of absence to represent India at San Remo, at the Eighth International Montessori Conference, organised under the auspices of the Italian Government. He seized the occasion to visit schools in Italy, Switzerland, France, and England. What he saw opened fresh horizons to him, and he felt, that solid as his experience had now become after ten years of teaching, further advanced study in an up-to-date Western educational laboratory was imperative. Accordingly, he enrolled for the Diploma in Childhood Psychology under Professor F. J. Schonnel, head of the Remedial Education Centre in the University of Birmingham's Post-graduate department.

The reputation of the Birmingham Diploma stands high in the English-speaking educational world, and as Mr. Raman is, at the time of writing, the only Indian to hold it, there is some interest in outlining the syllabus in order to form an idea of the potential value of Mr. Raman's work in his own country.

The Diploma's twelve months' full time course is described in an article entitled "Remedial Education" in the *Montessori Magazine**, April, 1950 by Dr. William Curr, of Birmingham, as offering intensive training to experienced teachers leading to appointment as lecturer in a teachers' training college, or

*The *Montessori Magazine* was published from Pilani between January, 1947, and October, 1950. Unfortunately, it failed to secure adequate support, and after over Rs. 10,000/- had been spent on it by its sponsors, the Magazine was wound up. It contains some first class material.

as adviser or organiser to a County or Borough educational authority. In addition to a programme of lectures on general and educational psychology and the more specialised techniques of mental testing, remedial teaching, and child guidance, Dr. Curr observes that this Diploma provides a thorough practical training which includes the survey of a school or an age group to determine the incidence of backwardness, and to identify bright children who are not working up to capacity. A group of children selected by means of this test survey is taken for remedial teaching in their own school, and each Diploma student also undertakes individual work at the University's Remedial Education Centre, with a child referred by his school as specially in need of help. Dr. Curr continues :

A most important part of the work of these Diploma Courses is the writing of a dissertation involving a piece of independent research into some educational problem. In psychological work, it is only too easy to meet with ill-founded theory, and the teacher who is acquainted with statistical and experimental technique, and with the rigorous discipline of sifting of evidence, testing hypotheses, and careful interpretation of data, is less likely to be at the mercy of every ill-founded notion which he meets. In a sense, too, every backward child presents the teacher with a miniature research problem involving a patient search for relevant clues, on which efficient and economical remedial measures may be based.

The cynic may deplore all this current concern with the backward child, even if potentially bright, and regard the effort and resources employed as misspent. He may argue that, in any case, many backward children are beset also with emotional difficulties of far more vital concern to the development of personality. This is a challenge which the advocate of remedial teaching must face squarely. Are we really justified in providing a comprehensive organisation to teach the 3 R's to children who are anxious, inhibited, discouraged? Is it worth while?

Those who have experience of Remedial teaching know the answer The ex-truant and illiterate, now happily working through an easy reader, is learning not only to read, but that he no longer needs to assert his injured personality by staying away from school The girl who is devoting precious hours to the mysteries of long division is not just learning how to do sums. That trivial achievement alone would not bring from her headmaster the comment: "Her Arithmetic is certainly improving, but what impresses us most is that she is quite a different girl since she started her weekly hour at the centre She was slovenly, dirty and untidy, but she carries herself erect now, and takes a pride in her appearance This awakening of personality has come, not just from the ability to do arithmetic, but from the discovery that her former difficulties no longer baffle her, that the teacher is 'on her side', finding errors in order to help her to overcome them, that life itself is on her side, and all she has to do is to live it.

Such a course, which is officially described as "full time", leaves the serious student little leisure, but as Mr. Raman believes in leisure-time hobbies for himself as for his pupils, he pursued his hobby at Birmingham, and since education is his hobby, his leisure was suitably filled by taking the Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching of the University of London. These two courses are scheduled to cover two years and three months, but Mr. Raman completed them to the satisfaction of his two sets of instructors in Birmingham and in London in the twelve months between July, 1949, and August, 1950.

All Indians have heard stories of incidents over questions of colour in Europe and it is therefore natural that some should arrive with misgivings as to what may be in store for them. Mr. Raman, however, returned to India with happy memories. Far from finding the British stand-offish, he encountered a friendliness which, one feels, must have been partly evoked by his own warm and out-giving nature. He recalls that, wishing to have a sight of the countryside before he left, he took a bus out of Birmingham on a cold winter's day and was later walking along a road between fields when he was stopped by shouts. He saw a burly figure in heavy boots and waterproof running towards him across the fields. The man, who proved to be a farmer, said that he saw Mr. Raman was a stranger and he therefore wondered whether he would like to be shown over an English farm. Raman accepted with enthusiasm and spent the next hour tramping round fields and cowsheds, listening to talk about farming ways and means, at the end of which the farmer invited him in to his home "to meet the missus" and have a bite of tea. Rarely can one human being have given keener pleasure to another than that Worcestershire farmer by the simple friendliness of his invitation to the shy stranger from far-off Shekhawati.

Mr. Raman was also impressed by the frankness with which the British say what they think and the equal frankness that they expect from others. The average Englishman is unaware of how blunt his speech strikes foreigners. I first noticed this years ago at meetings of the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris. A Frenchman, for example, would get up and say smoothly : "The last speaker has so perfectly expressed my views on the matter under discussion that it is hardly necessary for me to add anything, except perhaps to stress a point on which, doubtless for lack of time, he touched but lightly." From what followed it often

became clear that the second speaker in fact strongly disagreed with the first, but no one minded because of the elaborate formulas in which he wrapped his disagreement. On the other hand, when an Englishman rose, he was apt, meaning no harm at all, and speaking exactly as he would to another Englishman, to begin : "I disagree with the last speaker. He is wrong in thinking that..." Such direct phraseology made Continental Europeans curl up with the same horror that would have overtaken the company if someone had used the word "bloody" in front of Queen Victoria.

Everywhere Mr. Raman went, he found that, as an Indian, he was expected to explain the Indian viewpoint about everything.

"Characteristic was the man who said : 'Come on! Hard words break no bones ! Let the brickbats fly !' ", Mr. Raman told me, and the dramatic way in which he declaimed the words *Let the brickbats fly !* revealed at once the depth of the impression that they had made on him, and his relish of the good arguments that they provoked. Indeed, he has since developed what he calls the British "brickbat" attitude of mind into an ideal to stimulate intellectual honesty and frank exchange among his pupils in Pilani, and of course it accords with the Montessori aim of promoting the free expression of the individual personality.

But the following anecdote will relieve those who may be fearing that Mr. Raman had the misfortune to leave England without meeting a single representative of the old school :

While in Birmingham, he fell into the habit of lunching in a café at a small table to which an Englishman also came every day. As no one introduced them, the Englishman and the Indian upheld the highest traditions of British etiquette by carefully avoiding each other's glance, and by so manipulating the salt and the pepper that no word was exchanged. At the end of twelve months, when Mr. Raman's departure for India put an end to this silent collaboration, both he and the Englishman were still happily unaware of each other's business and identity.

A mile and a half from the orderly masses of the new white buildings around the Pilani campus, away in the heart of the old village, amidst a maze of narrow streets, alive with Indian sights, sounds, and smells, crowded with pack camels, strings of donkeys, herds of goats and humanity, you suddenly come upon a building which makes you pause to marvel how a corner of Paris has been transplanted to this Rajasthani

village. Not the crumbling, picturesquely sordid Paris of the rue de la Huchette*, not the nineteenth-century Paris of Haussmann, but the Paris that is so streamlined, so modern—the Palais de Chaillot, and the Museum of Modern Art in the (significantly named) Avenue de New-York—that it has hardly had time to become part of Paris. Here in old Pilani, within an ornamentally walled compound, stands a flat-roofed, circular, white concrete building, 50 feet high and 225 feet in circumference, with deep verandahs encircling, like broad belts, the ground and first floors. Wings added to either side at the rear make the front seem to jut out like the stern of a great ship about to leave Pilani in its wake. This building and everything in it was designed for children, and adapted to their needs, physical and psychic. It is the main block of the Montessori Junior School. It was described by Madame Montessori as the embodiment in bricks and mortar of her ideals, and, on another occasion, as the dream of her life come true.

The School is surrounded by lawns and a playground in which are a climbing frame, a chute, a swing, a see-saw, and a giant stride.

Passing through the beautifully proportioned verandah whose walls are covered by original mural paintings done by Pilani artists and others, you enter the central play room, a spacious 2,500 sq. ft., circular hall, soaring up to the full height of the two floors.

Here, you are in a child's world. If you walk upstairs, you wonder why you progress so slowly, and why you feel as if about to fall on your nose. The bannisters have somehow descended to knee level out of your reach, so that you peer dizzily into the depths below. You glance at your feet and realise that these steps are two or three inches high—and the bannisters are not meant for you but for someone four foot nothing. You feel gigantic. Luckily, you perceive, as a concession to elderly visitors, a guide rail, an extension like an elevated railway, imposed on top of the children's bannisters. You grasp it, and the dimensions of your own world half slide back to you. It is a relief to find that you are provided for but chastening to think that you are as out of your element here as Gulliver in Lilliput.

Around the floor of the central playroom, the children's work tables are (unlike the rows of desks in conventional class

* But I am told that the rue de la Huchette has been cleaned up since I knew it twenty-five years ago.

rooms drawn up rank upon rank, in military array) dotted irregularly here and there betokening self-employed individual workers. Chairs, tables, easels, innumerable charts and pictures pinned on the bare walls, even the windows, all are scaled to a child's-eye view of the world. Against the walls are sets of Montessori apparatus. In the rear, a little stage, low enough for short legs to step on and off, contains drums, a zithar, and a set of musical China bowls half filled with water. This is the music master's corner.

The children come from all over India. Some are only four years old. I remember, one Sunday, passing a group of tiny tots waiting for their lunch. They were all in tidy white trousers and loose shirts. One, a little Sikh, was standing with his thick curly hair flowing below his waist while the matron combed and oiled it. His expression was that of all children having the tugs taken out. Another had already had his done up in the customary Sikh top-knot on the front of his head.

Internationalism, in the sense of tolerance, the desire to know and to understand people of other races, and to avoid a narrow local patriotism, is one of Mr. Raman's ideals, and the Pilani Montessori children take their first steps towards it in this playroom, in the centre of which is a double circle of flags of the United Nations, with the pale blue and white flag of the U. N. itself raised above the others. A wall chart identifies flags and countries.

There is not enough room to display the flags of all the United Nations simultaneously, so once a week the children hold a flag-changing ceremony. To be allowed to choose your flag, to learn its name, its place on the chart, and to plant it upright in the circle, is a reward for good conduct. Stories about the countries of the flags and something of their geography are told. Nothing is done casually or in a hurry. One by one, the old flags are taken down and put carefully away, and, one by one, the new flags brought out, carried high in front with both hands, the children marching in slow ceremonial step. They realise that the flags of other peoples are to be treated with the respect due to their own. A white circle, painted on the floor, serves a double purpose in helping the children to march slowly in a steady circle, and in providing them with an exercise in balance.

Apart from the central play room, the building includes four hexagonal rooms, each of no less than 1,700 sq. ft., with ceilings kept low to create a feeling of cosiness.

Around the playroom, at first floor level, runs a gallery, which is used to exhibit periodically changed pictures painted and drawn by children from other lands, and lent through the U.N.O. It was Canada's turn while I was there. The blues, reds, whites, and greens, of that Northern clime struck clear and cool in this dusty country of oranges, purples, pinks, olives, and yellows. Prairies and cowboys, icebergs and water falls, skyscrapers and ice-cream vendors, Quebec Castle and bus queues—what an exciting and concrete way of bringing home to the children of India the existence of a great and friendly member of the Commonwealth half a world away.

In tall glass cases on the sun verandah, opposite budgerigars chippering in an aviary, were exhibits from Sweden, America, Russia, Italy, and Switzerland, of lesson books, toys, and educational apparatus—counters, spelling games and cards.

MONTESSORI PRACTICE

On page 155 we noted the four principles on which Madame Montessori based her system, but since it is not always easy to understand what principles mean unless they are illustrated by some practical examples, it is at this point a reasonable question to ask : What goes on inside this streamlined building in old Pilani ?

To provide an adequate explanation of Montessori practice for those unfamiliar with it would require a book in itself. The most that I can do is to offer glimpses and hints, and hope that the reader's curiosity may be aroused to send him to read further for himself. First, let us hear what Mr. Raman says about his aims :

> When a young child comes to our school, he comes from the family environment where he has felt at home and secure. This sense of security must not be undermined but must be built up in our school, and so it is the first duty of the Montessori teacher to make the child feel at home in his new environment. Cheerfulness, sympathy, and affection are the teacher's main means to this end.
>
> We Montessori teachers believe that the child learns and grows through his own activities. He must, therefore, be given full freedom of work. But we should not forget that when the child first comes to school, he is rarely normally developed. In his home he may have either received too much attention, suppressing his free activities, or he may have been neglected, making him hungry for love and attention. In such cases, a course of normalisation is necessary. Unless the child begins to use the Montessori material correctly, and respects the rights

of other children, he is not entitled to freedom of work in the prepared environment of the school.

Neither during the process of normalisation, nor at any time, should the teacher force a child in any way; he must tactfully secure his cooperation in joining in, or witnessing an exercise done by other children, or shown by the teacher.

While presenting material to the child or showing him the process of doing and exercise, the teacher must be precise in all details. After the material has been presented or the exercise demonstrated, he should leave the child alone to act by himself. The child attains perfection not by watching others but by practising himself.

The Montessori teacher knows that the aim of an exercise is not the immediate result, but something much more. Therefore, he should never try to correct mistakes that the child may commit Instead, he should pretend that he has in demonstrating made the mistake himself and thus help the child to correct it by giving another correct demonstration. But if the child cannot get it right, he should be given another altogether different exercise. He will eventually come back to the exercise that he could not at first do, and get it right.

Some people complain that after some time, or even from the very beginning, the children take no interest in the material or the exercises. Such people begin to regard the material and the exercises themselves as the end in view; they forget that everything provided in the environment to give activity to the child is only a means to acquire a particular kind of training or development. The child takes interest only as long as he needs it to achieve this aim. Therefore, the teacher should always be on the watch to remove from the environment any material that has ceased to interest.

The teacher surrounds the child only with things that are neither too easy nor too difficult for him, suited to his age.

Last but not least, the Montessori teacher remembers that his task is that of a director, not of a preceptor. He follows the interest and needs of the child; he is neither dogmatic nor authoritarian.

I follow this with two extracts from the *Montessori Magazine* that was published in Pilani between 1947-50, not only because they give useful pictures of what goes on in a Montessori School, but also because they give an idea of the quality of the magazine's contents, and of its non-nationalistic outlook.

Here are extracts from a case history written by A. T. Corcoran, a London schoolmaster in the April, 1950, issue:

She came into the Montessori classroom because it was felt that she was so difficult, so dull, so destructive and so unpleasing in her person, that the staff demanded a sharing of the burden whilst she remained in the Infants' School...

She was always called Maggimay although her correct name was Margaret May. She was six years of age, and, as far as appearance

went, she lacked all the grace and beauty of the normal child, but she was so young, so lost, so desperately frightened as she stood clinging to the hand of one who was about to throw her off, that I could scarcely refrain from holding and comforting her. Now the hand is removed and she stands alone, once more facing strange children in a strange room.

I knew most of her school history and it was a sad one. Entering at four years of age, she had been a cause of annoyance to each teacher with whom she had been placed. As each class was mass taught, she was an outstanding piece of grit in the progress wheel of the class. Loud and frequent were the complaints heard in the Staff Room : "She is a thorough nuisance", "She holds up my work", "She knocks over everything so that I dare not let her move", "She is so repulsive with her dribbling", and so the chorus swelled to the refrain :

"Go away, Maggimay,
Maggimay, go away !"

Where? "Anywhere." I knew all this but I did not know, as I came to later, that the home circumstances of this child were infinitely more depressing than were those of the school.

Well, here she was standing almost in the middle of the room which was, of course, always clear of furniture so that floor work with apparatus could go forward. All the shelves and cupboards were openly displaying their various objects and the children were helping themselves freely from them. After a time she took her hands from her face and stared in utter bewilderment at the scenes of gay activity around her. Oh ! but the children were busy. They were all younger, and certainly smaller than Maggimay and the position which she had taken up caused many traffic blocks. However, most of the children managed to steer their way around her, in their haste scarcely giving her a glance. After a time, when the cupboards were more deserted, she ventured slowly towards them, examined them and then, clutching a box of beads, turned and deposited herself and her treasure on an occupied work mat, thus effectively stopping further operations by the boy already in possession of it. Of course, she was oblivious of this and of the fact that she had broken a law of the classroom.

This state of affairs, however, could not be long hidden from Gladys, a self-appointed hostess of five and a half years of age, who invariably relieved me of any worries that might ensue from the arrival of a new pupil. And now, as usual, Gladys came to the rescue. Seeing that someone needed initiation into the technique of social behaviour, she advanced towards Maggimay and although I could not hear, I could gather from the gesturings that accompanied her words, that all was now well. Introductions had taken place and the new child had been brought to realise that a person of superior knowledge was now before her offering help and guidance. She raised Maggimay, who still held on to her beads, and led her a guest to her own table.

Naturally, it was not possible to observe this child except at intervals, but I must testify to the loving help and teaching that was given her again and again, not only by Gladys, but also by the more advanced children in the class. Never did Maggimay hear a

word of discouragement when making her feeble efforts to acquire the various skills. The less intelligent children rather tended to leave her to her own devices, but the brighter children, especially the girls, were keen to bring her up to standard in her studies and would teach her, test her and then quietly and happily report progress to me.

How did they know that she needed this extra help? She, as well as the other children, received her share of individual teaching from me. It seemed as if they sensed her helplessness, and, as we who have conducted these Montessori classes know, their generous spirits sprang to the task Perhaps it was that, in spite of her large body, these girls felt the call of the younger child in her, to their maturity.

Whatever the cause, Maggimay accepted their guidance and glowed with happiness For ever active, sweeping, colour-matching, patiently attempting the early steps in reading and number, friendly with all the children and accepted by them as an equal, she knew for eighteen months only love and kindness with never, never a hint that she lacked those mental powers whose possession would have ensured her a Grade A mark to present to the Junior School.

And now the time had come when she must, with her companions, enter into another phase of her school life. As well as I could, I noted on the transfer form her serious disability in regard to learning but listed also those qualities in her which would repay in great measure any sympathy or forbearance extended to her by the teacher whom I hoped these notes would reach.

So the days came when, joyously, the children mounted the steps to the Junior School and to Miss X. Maggimay was one with them in their delight at the great adventure ahead, and we said goodbye...

Mr. Corcoran then relates that some of his old pupils who had left with Maggimay for the Junior School used to pay him friendly visits, and he proceeds :

Amongst those few were two girls, who, more than any, had fostered Maggimay. They were almost invariably happy, even jolly, children, so that on one occasion when they came into the room and slowly walked towards my table and then stood looking at me in solemn silence, I began to suspect that something was troubling them However, I smiled and waited. They smiled, they whispered "Maggimay is bad."

My first thought was that there had been a childish quarrel and was preparing to deal playfully with the situation, when both the girls burst into tears and between their sobs I heard "But she's not—But she's not!"

I was puzzled at all this, but felt that these girls were deeply grieved and agitated about something in regard to their little friend

Piece by piece the story was unfolded. Miss X had, of course, found out that in poor Maggimay she had no promising scholar I gathered that Maggimay had displeased Miss X, that she had been held up to ridicule in front of the other children, who were as completely ignorant of her offence as was Maggimay herself. She was given no occupation and once more she was the grit in the progress

wheel of yet another class. All our patiently erected defences were struck down in one blow and the child was now exposed once more...

Finally, here is a revealing passage from an article entitled "Montessori And Her Critics", published in the *Montessori Magazine,* September, 1947, by Dr. J. Ewart Smart, sometime Borough Education Officer, of Middlessex, England. Dr. Ewart Smart is considering what happens to children who, brought up in a Montessori School, then pass out to a conventionally conducted school :

They are transformed to an atmosphere of class teaching. Although there is a great deal of individual work yet the unit is mainly the class and not the child. So the child is thrown back to the pre-Montessori stage. The freedom once lived daily as a matter of course, in a specially prepared environment, is now superseded by a forced discipline of an entirely different character. No more the self-activity of a Montessori group, but the discipline of a command! The class becomes a platoon and the teacher, the platoon commander. During transition from Infants to Juniors, the teacher tries forcibly to mould her new pupils into a pattern which she considers necessary in order to control them as a single unit. On the other hand, the children who were accustomed to free and unfettered movements in classrooms, who were permitted to work on a table or on the floor as they pleased, who selected their tasks as a matter of course, now find that all these degrees of freedom are a thing of the past. The rows of desks, the old familiar blackboard and easel, and all the other accessories of an ageworn system form part of the environment which now replaces the Children's House. Well may the junior teachers exclaim : 'These children have no discipline, they will have to be taken in hand! They walk about the class room without permission. They are not used to doing sums written on the blackboard. It will take three months at least before they can be made to settle down and really taught as a class'. And all this goes on because the junior school teachers have not had the benefits of a training in Montessori methods. It is only to be expected that they will champion those methods to which they have been long accustomed, and which from their point of view they have found to be efficacious.

If, as I hope, these extracts throw light on Montessori practice, they also suggest that cruelty and even psychological harm may follow from taking a child from the Montessori infants' play-way learning rooms, and pitchforking it into a conventional school. This is avoided at Pilani by the existence of a Montessori High School, side by side with the Junior, in which the same methods are continued up to University age. This may be another surprise for those unfamiliar with Montessori ideas who generally assume that her methods only apply to infants. Even many professional teachers, who ought to know better, believe this. A moment's

thought, however, suggests that, although children will grow out of the sensory apparatus, if the principles of freedom and self-education are sound they must apply to boys of any age. But, someone may object, if it is cruel to send a small child to a conventional class-bound school, is it not equally cruel to send him at the age of 18 to a technical school, or to the University, or out into the world, with no experience of life save kindness and the expression of his own personality? I think that the answer is "No", because a boy of 18, above all one sanely brought up by Montessori methods with a well-balanced personality, is better fitted intellectually and emotionally to cope with harsh realities. He is grown up. If he were going to a British University, his Montessori training in the organisation of his own programme of work would be an asset, because there are no classes to attend and all work is done in your own way in your time. Speaking from my own experience, I may say that, coming from my public school with its time tables, and class teaching, I was for a long time lost at Oxford. I had become so dependent on supervision and direction that I wasted a valuable year learning how to work by myself. Unfortunately, in Indian Universities and especially in technical schools, almost all the work is done in classes, but although here the ex-Montessori boy will chafe at the absurdity of the method, and the slowness of the pace set, he should have acquired such deeply ingrained habits of work, and psychologically should be so balanced, that he should adjust himself without difficulty.

Some hundreds of thousands of men and a small number of women teach in India, but only a handful have been trained to teach. Twice during his time in Pilani Mr. Raman has had to train a staff up from scratch.

When, in 1944, he first took charge of the *Shishumandir** No. 2, which was formed by combining the ten teachers and 250 children from two primary schools and admitting children under five, he had to train his teachers. By day, they looked after the children; in the evening, Mr. Raman gave them classes. There is nothing difficult for a teacher to learn about the use of Montessori apparatus; the difficulty is to change his attitude of mind towards his pupils. Because children know little and have no experience, the untrained teacher bosses them about; because he has not the patience, or perhaps the wit, to explain, he gives them orders without reasons. Instead of spreading out the tools of knowledge

* Babies' school.

before them and showing them how to learn for themselves, he tries to pump into their brains his own knowledge of history or arithmetic. He muddles them and puzzles them, and if they dare to show their puzzledom, he is bad tempered with them. He is not preparing children for life but using them to minister to his ego, his love of authority, of having people go when he says "Go", and come when he says "Come". A Montessori teacher has to learn the same technique as the psychiatrist, for their aims are the same : the teacher is educating the uneducated, and the psychiatrist is re-educating the wrongly educated; and in each case the practitioner's object is to avoid imposing his views and solutions—his personality—on the child or the patient, but to set him on his own feet so that he is capable of facing the world alone—the master of his fate, the captain of his soul.

The Birla Montessori High School, for boys aged 8 to 17, was opened in 1947, and when the first batch of boys arrived from outside, Mr. Raman who had had nothing to do with non-Montessori children for years, was taken aback by their lack of initiative and dependence on their teachers. It proved a difficult weaning. Individual tests revealed that most of the boys were unable to study anything without direction, and were unable to follow through a train of investigation which would have been simple to any Montessori child. In the course of time, however, they gradually ceased to sit passive and bewildered and found their way into the individual assignments given them. And, as previously with the Juniors, so now with the Seniors, Mr. Raman had to train a staff. Those who had any training had been taught by class methods and their short training had not gone further than some reading about the better known systems of individual work, of which they had no practical experience. The change-over had to be gradual for teachers and taught alike—and even for parents, because some boys were removed from the school when horror-stricken parents learned that Mr. Raman announced that for one whole day a week each boy would be allowed to work at whatever he liked!

Mr. Raman invented what he called "crutches" to help the boys along into the new methods. After some weeks, he inspected each class in order to find out how many could now make up unaided a story of their own, paint their own picture, or make up their own sums. So, by the end of a certain period, every boy in the school had collected several "crutches", *i.e.* cards upon which each had himself written

entries, endorsed by Mr. Raman, such as the following:

"This work I can do myself:

"Geography: I can make an igloo. I can make Eskimo clothes. I can point out on the map where Eskimos live. I know where to find a book to read about them in the library."

But "crutches" became unnecessary after a few months, and the school now runs smoothly on assignment lines This means that a schedule of work, covering all subjects, to be completed with a fortnight, is given to each pupil, who is allowed to do the work in what order and at what time he likes. The teacher maintains a chart of the progress made in each subject, so that the pupil is kept aware of the state of his work. Each subject has its own teacher and class room, and when the pupil wants to study arithmetic or history, he goes along to the appropriate room. This system is known as the Dalton Plan because it was devised by a pupil of Madame Montessori, Helen Parkhurst, who first used it in 1920 in the High School at Dalton (Mass.). To the uninitiated, the plan may seem designed to enable teachers to sit back and read novels while their charges flounder in the deep end by themselves, but without trained and watchful teachers the plan would not work at all. When, for example, a boy has finished his work for the fortnight on, say, history, he is not allowed to go on to the second fortnight's work in history until he has completed his first fortnight's work in all other subjects, and it is the teacher's duty where necessary to help the boy to draw up his own personal schedule of work. The system enables a boy to devote more time to his weaker subjects according to his individual needs. The teacher will organise group work if he sees that a number of boys are at the same stage in a given subject. Group conferences teach co-operation, and help to clear up general difficulties, or to give an introductory survey to a new topic. Some of the system's most valuable results are, on the other hand, achieved by help given to individuals in their efforts to complete an assignment with which they are having difficulties. "In this manner," says Miss Parkhurst in *Education on the Dalton Plan* "a pupil advances steadily, job by job through the curriculum. If in a school year of nine or ten months he only finishes eight jobs on account of absence or illness, he begins the ninth job in the following year. The clever child may, on the contrary, accomplish in one year the work mapped out to cover eighteen months. Often the slow, apparently less intelligent, child gains in rapidity, and in any case he builds

well and soundly at his own natural rate."

From the viewpoint of the conventional teacher, the disadvantage of the Dalton Plan is that the average student is apt to progress more slowly than in class work which covers more ground in less time by relying on the teacher's suggestions and notes and on the student's memory. In other words, by the old methods it is possible to pump more knowledge in a shorter time into the student's mind. To this, the Montessori and Dalton teacher is indifferent, since he is less concerned with facts than with character training, and with equipping his students with a technique of self-education which they do not leave behind when they leave school but which remains with them for life.

The following list of the subjects rooms, which will arouse envy amongst many Western teachers skimped for money and equipment, suggests the range and thoroughness of the work done in the Montessori High School: (1) Historical and Social Studies, (2) Geography, (3) English, (4) Hindi, (5) Mathematics, (6) Music, (7) Science Theory, (8) Laboratory for Practical Biology, (9) Laboratory for Physics and Chemistry, (10) Art, (11) Sculpture Workshop, (12) Metal and Woodwork Workshop, (13) Library and Newspaper Room, (14) Teachers' Library, (15) Educational Guidance and Intelligence Test Room, and (16) the Audio-Visual Education Room.

I remember seeing boys in the Geography room one day making out itineraries from Pilani to Paris, to Ottawa, to Tokio, with the aid of Thomas Cook's tourist pamphlets, looking up train and 'plane schedules, writing "letters" to hotels for reservations, calculating the cost of tickets and excess baggage, mapping their route across continents and oceans and planning the length of their stops. Such work calls for initiative, factual investigation, accuracy, foresight, organisation, and gives practice in letter writing and in number work, in time and in money.

In the Mathematics room, I noticed the wooden cubes, cones, and other apparatus together with Montessori's board of a thousand pegs upon which square and cube roots can be found. The geometrical solids were not large like those in so many art rooms, but were designed for small hands. They looked clean and well kept, which was a tribute to whichever boy was in charge of that duty.

I passed the Art Room, with its gay pictures on the wall, and a stack of Gorang Babu's sketches in a corner—beauti-

ful cartoons in tempera for a series of murals, in his diamond-point style, containing figures and architecture, typical of the traditional Hindu school. Gorang Babu and Bina Devi, Art Mistress of the Balika Vidyapeeth, were contemporaries at Santiniketan University. They met again in Pilani and were married in 1951.

I noticed that everything everywhere was tidy and Mr. Raman pointed out that tidiness came naturally to Montessori trained boys.

"In addition to the mere acquisition of knowledge," he said, "they have in the environment all that is necessary to carry on the exercises of practical life : they learn concentration, co-ordination of movements, independence, social co-operation and adjustment, and a sense of order because everything has its place and must be put back for the benefit of others. There is only one set of each kind of apparatus and a part of the social training consists of waiting for your turn. The boys sweep the floors, dust the furniture and the equipment, clean the windows, polish their shoes, arrange the flower vases, and cut the vegetables up for food. Their brooms, dustpans, clothes, brushes, wash basins, tables and cupboards are all of graded sizes."

"Do they *really* do all that? Or is that just a part of the Montessori patter ?" I asked jokingly.

Mr. Raman looked at me severely. "We don't preach anything we do not practise", he said. "That would be teaching them hypocrisy and humbug."

Mr. Raman's experiences in England are reflected in many ways in Pilani. For example :

"One day, the waste pipe of my Birmingham landlady's bathroom went wrong," he said. "I discovered that she did not need to send for a plumber. Her husband mended it. Another time, the light fused and he put that right, too. Whatever was needed about the house, nobody was ever sent for from outside. To me, this was an eye-opener, and I said to myself : 'Why should we be dependent on servants and *mistris* in Pilani ?' "

So the Montessori boys learn how to do all the household mending jobs on plumbing, lights, furniture, rugs and bicycles. And Mr. Raman showed his Machiavellian Montessori mind by the name that he found for this subject—not Practical Household Upkeep, or Elementary Plumbing, Carpentry, and Mechanics, but—the Hobbies Club! Everyone, he told me is keen to belong to the club and to take part in all its

(strictly leisure time) activities.

Leisure time activities! I had a sudden suspicion, or an inspiration (depending on the way you look at it).

"Those stone carvings that you have mounted on pedestals? They're new since I was here last. What are they?"

"They come from the ruins of an ancient town, where I have secured permission from the Archaeological Survey to dig," Mr. Raman said.

"The boys excavate?"

"On Sundays. We sometimes spend the whole day there. It is an old Hindu city that was destroyed by the Moghuls."

"So you have added archaeology to the curriculum. Or is it a hobby?"

"What is a hobby? What is a part of the curriculum? That's an artificial distinction. It's all fun and it's all education."

Mr. Raman spoke the words lightly, but when one thinks of the total absence of any knowledge of teaching technique in so many schools, when, indeed, I recall the unnecessary miseries that were inflicted in the name of education upon me as a boy, his words seem worth framing in gold, or at least setting up in italics: *It is all fun and it is all education.*

The more one studies the Birla Montessori School, the more one realises that its aims and practice are wider than its name implies. It is essentially an educational laboratory in which every theory or practice gets tried out that attracts Mr. Raman's interest in the flow of new books on education that, as they are published, he buys from Britain and America.

It is relevant to reflect that, great as Madame Montessori's fundamental contribution to theory was in her basic emphasis on self-education, and great as her contribution to practice was in her mathematical and sensory apparatus, she had curious blind spots in the aesthetic sphere. Roughly speaking, and at the risk of a generalisation which may do her injustice, Madame Montessori understood and approved of practical matters like engineering and bridge building, but distrusted poetry, mythology, and unrealistic art, as valueless fantasies. Mr. Raman accepts her apparatus but does not limit himself to it. He tests, discards, or adopts permanently, ideas from other sources. He uses free drawing and painting; he encourages story telling and the activities of the imagination in any form. He accepts the Montessori principles of "Cosmic Education" which was the name that she chose for her conception of what others call a "correlated curriculum".

All the subjects taught are regarded as part of the whole—the Cosmos; each subject is regarded as an "item of culture" and the teaching of no item is isolated from the others.

"This is not," Mr. Raman asserts, "a correlation of subjects in a new way, but a correlation of the items of culture so as to give a conception of the whole, not to develop a disjointed miscellany, but organised knowledge in the child's mind."

I have profound respect for Madame Montessori's work but, as a writer, I find her discursive, diffuse, and difficult to interpret in concrete terms. Nevertheless, she is full of stimulating ideas. For example, either an article of hers, with which I struggled in the September, 1947, *Montessori Magazine*, boils down to the following, or else the effort to understand her has extracted from my own mind what strikes me as an admirable idea: Madame Montessori sees (or—if I misinterpret her—I see) the contemporary world as peopled by personalities injured psychologically to a greater or lesser extent by their education. These injured personalities spend a large part of the rest of their lives in getting their own back on the world for the injuries done to them : spite, jealousy, greed, anger, aggressiveness, intellectual dishonesty, crime, and all forms and degrees of anti-social behaviour, in all ranks of society, originate in defects of education, more particularly in psychological mistreatment. If we can transform our educational methods, if every child in the world were educated in accordance with the principles outlined in the course of this chapter, then, Madame Montessori argues, "...one will not consent to become consciously or unconsciously a destructive force against humanity...men... will be unwilling to use the supernatural and universal powers that they possess for a cosmic cataclysm to destroy the fruits of civilisation ... conscious of the value of humanity (they) will refuse to obey an insane and absurd command, that of destroying those who produce and maintain the civilisation in which we all live". These are large claims, hopes rather than syllogistic conclusions, and I feel sure that, since the greater must include the smaller, Madame Montessori would have agreed with me that were education universally conducted upon modern lines, the world, nationally *and* internationally, would be a saner, happier, easier place, and, if I am right in interpreting this to be the ultimate aim of Madame Montessori's Cosmic Education, the sooner we all step, with Mr. Raman, on to her band wagon the better.

Mr. Raman finds that Cosmic Education is usefully applied by the American "Unit Plan", which is yet another name for what used to be called a "special approach"at the Froebel Institute. The Unit Plan is carried out, or a special approach made, by choosing a subject, such as Rainfall, and studying it from every aspect. In Science, evaporation and condensation are considered; in Biology, the effects of rainfall on living organisms; in Geography, the cycles of the monsoon ; in History, the civilisations that depended upon rainfall, like Egypt, the Indus valley, and so on. The Americans, with their characteristic thoroughness, have thought out complete schedules of units, scaled to different age groups. The Unit Plan has its place in any sound scheme but, like everything else, it needs to be used with a sense of proportion. It is helpful to cover certain ground, but becomes bogus if made to cover the whole range of the syllabus. One can imagine children exclaiming in exasperation towards the end of a term on Rainfall : "It never rains but it pours. I wish the heavens would dry up for a bit."

"Have you found use in Pilaṇi for the Remedial Education that you studied in Birmingham ?" I asked Mr. Raman.

"From time to time. Miss Gokhale, who has worked with me here from the beginning, maintains full records of treatments and results. We had a boy who stole. You will have noted that nothing is kept locked up. All our materials, equipment, laboratories—everything—are accessible at all times ; there is no register of books taken out in our library and no one sends out reminders about books overdue for return. The boys handle such expensive and delicate machinery as our wire recorder, projector, and pictograph. This freedom is part of our training in citizenship and responsiblity. When I found things beginning to go, I took the boys into my confidence. They discovered the culprit themselves and traced to his house in the village an assortment of things, including cinema reels. His mother was helping him to hide them. She was a bad influence. I gave the boy special treatment and he improved for a time, but I could not overcome his background. On the other hand, we have records of other cases in which we were successful. There was another boy who stole. The boys held a meeting about him and, stern as young people so often are, they were all for expelling the culprit, but I suggested that he should be allowed another chance, and turned to ask him what he thought about it. The boy immediately sentenced himself

tearfully to staying away from school for a fortnight, and every day he turned up of his own accord and stood in penance in the street outside, sometimes leaning his head against the railing for hours at a time, until he had served his sentence. Again and again I was tempted to ask him in, but I had the other boys to think of, so I let him take his punishment to the end."

Mr. Raman continued : "The boys feel that the school property belongs to them, and that it is up to them to see that it is not broken, or misused, let alone stolen. As I've said —nothing is kept locked, and some of the material is immensely valuable, and some is just irreplaceable. Breakages in the Science Room have caused far more upset among the boys than the teachers."

"Do you get co-operation from the parents ?" I asked

"Sometimes," Mr. Raman replied.

The limited diffusion in India of a knowledge of psychology, and of the problems that face teachers, makes for friction rather than co-operation between parents and teachers, and is, as we shall see on pages 209-10, an outstanding impediment to the advance of education.

"Do you keep any records of the normal boys, or only the psychopathics?"

"We keep a record of every boy. These files are very valuable. If we find a boy deviating from the normal, we send him for psychological tests. If necessary we hold a conference about him."

"Where do you send them to for testing? To the Medical School in Delhi?"

"No, down the passage to our Mr. Khare's guidance room."

Mr. S. Khare, trained at Saugor University, administers a range of three hundred psychological, aptitude, and intelligence tests. Among the better known are the American T.A.T. for personality; the Rorschach psycho-diagnostic; the British Schonnel tests for vocabulary, intelligence, and attainment ; and Dr. J. C. Raven Hill's progressive matrices.

Bill Bell was moved by all this western scientific apparatus, and by Mr. Raman's shelves overflowing with the latest books on western theory and practice, to say :

"These books are based on western experience and needs. Can their ideas be transplanted on to Indian soil ?"

To which Mr. Raman replied : "We are already much

industrialised in India and our national aim is bigger, better, and wider industrialisation. Year by year we shall have a larger urban and industrialised population. The ways of living and the problems of such populations are the same in all countries. We are creating western situations which need western techniques to cope with them. Besides, we live in a shrinking world, in which we're all getting more and more mixed up—Asiatics, Africans, Europeans, Americans. Basically, there are no 'western' situations and problems; there are only 'world' situations and problems, and, to deal with them, we must use the best techniques wherever they come from. And don't forget this: We're not only borrowing—we are creating. Some day, teachers from abroad will discover us, study our methods, and introduce the Pilani scheme in Dalton, Mass.!"

Most interesting is the Audio-visual room from which, under Miss Sakuntala Gokhale's direction, the work of the whole school is co-ordinated. Here is stored all apparatus and equipment which teaches by hearing or seeing.

I remember, when I entered it one day, finding fifteen boys sitting cross-legged in two rows in front of a loud-speaker listening to a commentary in English on the Test Match between India and Pakistan. These were cricket enthusiasts who had earned time off from their lesson assignments to listen to the broadcast.

Behind the boys, I saw Miss Gokhale squatting on the floor pasting scenes of Venice onto brown paper sheets.

Miss Gokhale comes from Gwalior state. She took her B. A. at Agra, in Psychology, History, and Economics, and studied for her Teacher's Diploma under Madame Montessori herself.

She has built up Audio-visual records, comprising thousands of carefully indexed sets of charts, pictures, films, apparatus, cards, etc. covering hundreds of subjects. She is in touch with all the work that is being done by the teachers, and is ready with suggestions for material that may be of use to them. She showed me hundreds of film strips from England and America, each of them material for a half-hour talk. She showed me a little exhibition of representative articles brought back by boys from their holidays; an embroidered bag from Jaipur, a drinking bottle from Gwalior, slippers from Delhi. She showed me the exhibition of children's work presented by the Swedish Government, a charm-

ing collection of appliqué sewing, Christmas cards, mats, toys and pictures.

"How many sets of charts and pictures have you ?" I asked, glancing round the large wall-cupboards and glass-fronted cases, at the electrical recording, broadcasting, record-players, and other instruments about the room.

"I haven't the least idea," Miss Gokhale said after a moment's reflection. "Thousands and thousands. We have been collecting and assembling for six years now, and getting them from all over the world." *

"Do you do all this cutting, pasting, ticketing, classifying, and filing, unaided ?"

"Some of the boys are very good and offer to help. I train a number to help me in my work outside this room."

"Outside ?"

"I have to see that the showcases and bulletin boards in the different parts of the school are changed regularly as required."

I recalled the many pictures, graphs, and charts, that I had seen about the place : Indian culture through the ages, the economy of Basutoland, extinct animals, the solar system, the orbits of the planets, and so on.

"I try to give as many changes as they can digest," Miss Gokhale explained. "Some charts and subjects require longer than others to be absorbed."

"Many members of the staff contribute ideas and work," she went on. "We're lucky to have Gorang Babu to transform ideas into concrete things of beauty. And Mr. Raman has sat up many a night making charts and diagrams : he is responsible for many of the illustrations for the biology and physics rooms."

"We have a 'follow up' at intervals after instruction to make sure that we are getting results. If it is not properly handled, it's easy to let all this colourful material become mere wall decoration that people look at occasionally in idle moments. Every now and then I stop a boy after a film show and discuss it with him. Sometimes, I stop a group and put them through a little exam on a set of films or charts they've been using. The teacher and I jointly evolve further sets of illustrations to support his method of approaching a problem. I try to present my picture in such a way that they open up horizons for further study."

* This was in 1952.

MENTAL HYGIENE

IT WAS ON a cold morning that we set off from the Canal Kothi for the Montessori School to attend the fortnightly "mental hygiene" period given to all boys over eight years of age. Pandeji, who was the guest speaker, drove us into old Pilani in his little Hindusthan 10. The sun was licking up the mist, but the silence, the sharp air, and the heavily shawled figures which crept about the streets made one feel how early and how wintry was the day. The sweepers had not finished their work, but already a few small vendors were beginning to arrange their little displays of basketed wares. Tall camels in their grey winter coat were padding in from the villages. There seemed to be a great many of them. I had forgotten that the *suttee* was supposed to be taking place today*. By the time that we came back, about midday, entire families in their best finery were streaming in the direction of the burning-*ghat*.

The Montessori Senior School extends two wings down both sides of a garden court, in whose arcade there is an amusing *bas relief* mural in clay of a boy stealing a goose's eggs, while the goose chases his friend up a tree.

Upstairs, on the verandah outside the library, we came upon a long row of shoes, and another long row of their owners in their stockinged feet, waiting to enter. Their faces glowed from recent scrubbing; their blue jackets were smart and warm; the spontaneity with which their hands came up into the *namaste* greeting below smiling lips gave one an impression of happiness and order.

The library is a long narrow room with windows down one side, numerous glass bookcases, and a few chairs. *Dhurries* cover the floor so that the boys may sit to read comfortably in their customary cross-legged position. Today, pots of green ferns and flowering shrubs had been arranged between the bookcases and along the windows. Flowers had even been gathered from the garden and inserted in holes deftly punched in the leaves of the flowerless shrubs. A low table laden with blossoms and two bowls of burning incense stood at one end of the room in front of a *gadi* with a cushion, surrounded by ceremonial *dhurries*, prepared for Pandeji.

Bharat Vyas, the music master, a man of singular personality, came forward to greet us with *namaste* and a low bow. His manner has the conscious poise of one who is a great show-

* See pages 224-6.

62. "The dream of her life come true"—Madame Montessori's description of the Pilani School. Early morning saluting the flag ceremony Note new hostel going up

63. A corner of Paris transplanted to the Rajput desert. See page 165



64. Flags of Nations ceremony. See page 167



65 Gorang Babu working on a mural See page 183



66. Radha Raman and Bill Bell leaning on one of the carvings excavated by Montessori archaeologists



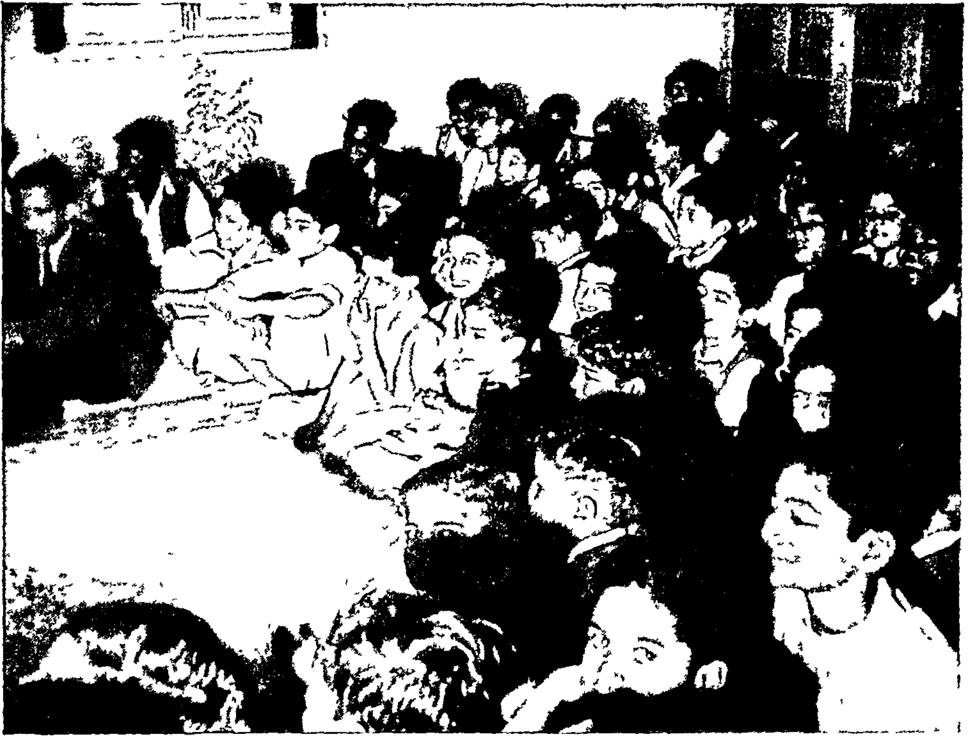
67. Montessori juniors



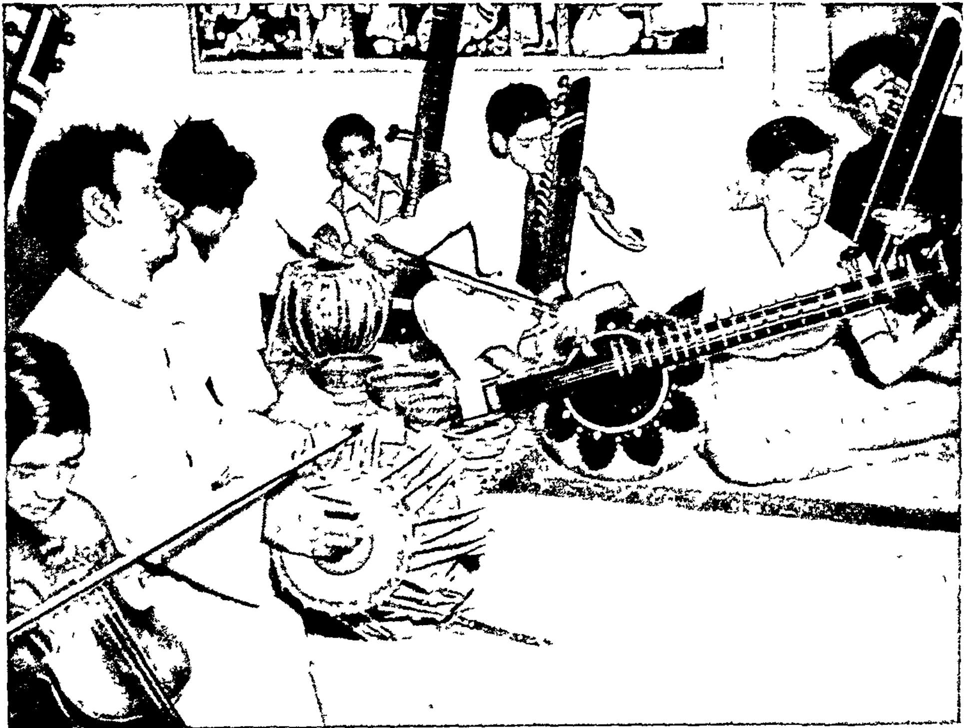
68. Collecting flowers to decorate classroom. The children make these pots themselves



69. "Bharat Vyas touched the strings and beg an to improvise" See page 185



70 “Bharat Vyas had all of us sitting up smiling, our eyes dancing, our bodies swaying”. See page 188



71. A music lesson



72. The beggar departs in triumph. See page 193



73. Avaunt ye fiends!



74 Om Prakash Misra, author and composer of "Jhoontia's Aunt"



75 "Jhoontia's Aunt" returns to the village in all her city finery

man and knows it. His hair was as musically strewn over his forehead as that of any European *maestro.* He wore diamonds in his ears—he has a large jewel box filled with tributes to his musicianship from many a (now vanished) court and (now *gadi*-less) maharajah. A drooping moustache straggling into a stubbly beard gives strong lines to a face notable for that false impression of featurelessness often found among artists. His forehead is intelligent. A brilliant and appraising pair of eyes, certainly not those of a mystic, ran Lora over from head to foot. His robe of dark saffron hung loosely upon his broad figure. Carved wooden beads and a partly tonsured head added a touch of the priestly to his appearance. He walked with a strange gait from long hours spent crouching with one or other of his bulbous, be-pegged, be-garlanded instruments across his knees. His diamonds flashed as he folded himself upon his mat and reached for a *sarode,* one of three instruments ready within his reach. In all things was he striking, even to the set of his figure as he bowed his head parallel with the line of the many strings along the neck of his *sarode,* and his spatulate hands spread over the gourd end of that subtle instrument, in which one set of strings is played, while another set below echoes in sympathy. Bharat Vyas' yellow robe folded around his limbs in swathes as artistically rhythmic as those in an ancient carved ivory buddha. Seen through the clouds of the incense which mingled with the heavy perfume of the blossoms on the table, he was as much an appeal to the dramatic as to the musical. Here was something that Mother India had pulled out of the folds of her *sari,* unique to her and her people.

And when Bharat Vyas touched the strings of his *sarode* and began to improvise, drawing melodies and rhythms in fractions and sub-fractions of tones and beats, even one such as I, who am not wholly at home in the idiom of Indian music, could recognise a great artist.

The school filed in and spread themselves cross-legged about the room, Armyn and Aminta went over and joined them. The masters sat along the wall. Pandeji occupied the low-cushioned *gadi.*

We began with five minutes' silence during which there was coughing, yawning, stretching, and restlessness.

Then Bharat Vyas took up his *sarode* and gradually focussed the attention of all upon him. For twenty-five minutes he played, with occasional snatches of song. As the

minutes went by, movement among the boys became less, until absolute repose seemed to have been attained. When Bharat Vyas had finished, Pandeji spoke for a quarter of an hour on how to choose a course of action, and how once chosen, to stick to it. He told of Mahatma Gandhi's early days in South Africa, and how he was led to decide to protest against the way in which Africans and Asians were treated, and how he was warned that if he did so, he would be made to suffer: how, his decision taken, he held to it; how he returned to India to continue the fight which eventually became one for independence.

Mr. Raman calls these talks "an effort to learn concrete ways of developing mental health." They range from religious instruction to practical psychological hygiene to help the boys to lead clean and constructive lives. Mr. Raman envisages these talks as essentially guidance for their personal problems.

There followed a song by Bharat Vyas, chosen both for its literary value and its devotional content. It was addressed to God: "Where should I go without You, who are my surest guard? For ever would I live in Your care."

After this Pandeji read passages from the *Gita* and gave a brief commentary upon them.

Mr. Raman concluded the one-hour meeting by saying that it was not enough to listen to advice; they must ponder it, and put it into action. An instructor could point the way, but they could each of them walk it themselves.

When I discussed this meeting with Mr. Raman afterwards, I said that what impressed me was, first, its atmosphere of calm and reverence; secondly, the high standard of music and of ideas put before the boys; in saying this I had in mind that some of our hymns meant for children are tinselly ("I want to be a little sunbeam, sunbeam, Be a little sunbeam for Jesus"), and some of our services for children are conducted with so conscious an attempt at avoiding the sanctimonious piety of a bygone era that they fail to create a religious atmosphere. Thirdly, and above all, I was struck by what seemed the extraordinary receptivity of the boys. A European or American school assembly could not have spent a solid hour sitting and listening without becoming increasingly restless. They would have yearned to do something themselves : to stand up to sing a hymn, to kneel to say a prayer, to indulge a cough or two while listening to the sermon.

Mr. Raman answered by recalling the restlessness of his boys during the initial five minutes' silence, which he attributed to the variety of impressions that they had received during the week; their minds were still reacting to the stimulation of events. The silence allowed their emotions to settle down, like powder that has been stirred in a glass of water and is now left to stand. This was, he pointed out, followed by Bharat Vyas' twenty-five minutes of music intended to express the various emotions which the boys may have experienced during the week: depression, irritation, anxiety, excitement, curiosity, determination, ambition. According to Mr. Raman, the music resolves any lingering mental disturbances or conflicts. Thus set free, the minds of the boys can absorb ideas and precepts without difficulty.

In retrospect, I cannot help asking how Bharat Vyas could be sure that what conveys (a) depression or (b) excitement to him may not suggest (a) pleasant languor or (b) irritation to some of his listeners? The incidental music that Serge Prokofieff wrote for the farcical film *Lieutenant Kije,* Fokine used for *The Russian Soldier,* one of his finest ballets choreographed for the American Ballet Theatre Company, and the music that conjured up visions of gaiety in its composer's mind suggested to Fokine scenes that were tender, poignant, macabre, and tragic. I could not help wondering what results would emerge if Mr. Raman's boys were given bits of paper and told to scribble down the ideas, moods, or emotions, suggested to them by Bharat Vyas' improvisations, and to what extent they corresponded to his intentions.

I sought a key to the tranquillity of these boys. I do not doubt that their tensions were relaxed, but was this the whole explanation? Is there something more readily passive, more innately meditative in the Indian temperament than in the Western? Was the school's tranquillity due to the foreknowledge that Vyas' music was intended to purge by Aristotelian pity, terror, and wonder? Was it the domination of his personality? Was his artistry able to establish a psychic relationship between his thoughts and those of his audience? Were the boys as quiet as that at every meeting?

I can only report what I saw at the one mental hygiene period that I managed to watch; to my regret, I never was able to fit in another in order to check and to enlarge my first impressions. But a discussion with Bill Bell, who attended two meetings, threw light on aspects that had puzzled me.

As to tranquillity, Bill confirmed my feeling that the period

that I had attended had assumed the atmosphere of a special occasion, with the result that the emphasis had been shifted from individual participation to passive receptivity. In the first place, Bill said that on his visits, Bharat Vyas had largely taken charge of the actual proceedings. He would interject comments on a poetry recitation as it was made. Fixing now this, now that individual boy with his keen eye, he would exclaim: "Ha! That's good! Did you hear that?" and evoke a personal response. Nor could the meaning of his own music be mistaken because he conveyed it by words or by looks.

"Indian music establishes a direct and personal relationship between artist and listener in a way Western music cannot attempt," said Bill. "Our music, of course, conveys emotions, but it has a closely ordered, complicated, and disciplined technique, which is highly intellectual. You can't analyse intellectually the type of music that Vyas plays. He is giving you the spontaneous and direct outpourings of his personality uninhibited by rules such as those of Western music. It's not a question of which is better. Their aims are totally dissimilar."

This fitted in with my knowledge of music in India, where although there are small orchestras, most music is solo singing or playing. Many traditional melodies are known and sung but the most highly regarded talent is improvisation. The inspiration of the moment is sought with religious fervour and humility, and Bharat Vyas, like many other Indian artists, gives the impression that he is listening to catch some strain, some echo from what the Greeks would have called his muse.

Whereas the mental hygiene period that I had attended had been largely one of exhortation, as in the sermon of a Western church, Bill reported that his periods had been essentially attempts to give the boys an aesthetic and moral experience by a combination of moods, thoughts, and ideas, induced by recitals of music and poetry, in which they had not merely responded to Bharat Vyas' leads and absorbed the chanting of verses by a poet, but had themselves participated by playing the China bowls and other instruments.

Bill himself felt the power of Bharat Vyas' personality and music. "After some minutes of serious music, absorbed by everyone with that absolute stillness that so impressed you," he said, "Vyas had us all laughing by a simple change in his mode; he gave us a look and I found myself laughing with him. I couldn't help it."

"Vyas makes his music, and different masters read and recite, but the conception of the whole session and the controlling hand is Raman's," Bill went on. "I think he realises the misuse to which his system could be put by someone who played on the boys' emotions with bad intentions. Certainly, although he may not know exactly what each person is going to say or read beforehand, he would never allow anyone of whose personality he did not approve to get up and talk, or even to enter the room . . ."

And, again, Bill said: "It's not a religious service. It's an uplifting aesthetic and emotional experience, like going to a great concert, or hearing Milton's poetry brought to life by someone outstanding. Raman calls it the inculcation of common sense and basic morality, and so it may be *indirectly*. But *directly* it is a psychological treatment. I guess he's cooked it up out of all those shelves of books on psychology in his study. It's a kind of psychic catharsis."

My conclusion is that, owing to the combination of personalities and circumstances involved, Mr. Raman's experiment in mental hygiene is (a) unique, and (b) of practical interest to all psychologists and educators. I direct their attention to it as meriting detailed study and investigation.

A CAMP FIRE

ALL THE entertainments described in this book—those of the Birla College, Balika Vidyapeeth, the Engineering College, and the Montessori School—are intended to entertain both players and audiences, but the Montessori Camp Fire has, in addition, a conscious psychological objective of which Mr. Raman and his staff are keenly aware although the players themselves are not. Let me explain :

The activities of all human beings are governed by instinct, but whereas some proportion of an adult's life is governed by instinct plus reason, the younger the individual, the greater the part played by instinct. Now, every instinct finds, in a state of nature, an outlet in action. Action is instinctive. Whether any human beings have ever lived in a state of nature seems doubtful, because all groups—tribal, family, or national—impose taboos and restrictions on the conduct of their members. The higher the level of civilisation, the more complicated these restrictions are likely to be, the more "artificial", irksome, and frustrating, they will seem to the individual. Frustrated instincts lead to anti-social behaviour, ranging from mild neuroses to murder. Fortunately,

Nature has provided sublimation, the using up in a constructive social way of energy derived from instincts, and this enables civilisation to survive and to progress. But sublimation is often difficult or incomplete for children and adolescents who are under the double pressure of parental (or school) authority and of civilisation as a whole, so for them Nature has provided play as a means of utilising energies. Play is recognised by all modern psychologists as educational in itself. Organised games, hobbies, theatricals, and all similar amenities that every school or college worth the name tries to provide, use up instinctive energies in constructive ways, but of these outlets that which is perhaps of special value in developing the imaginative and aesthetic sides of the personality is theatricals in general, and charades in particular.

So Mr. Raman has inaugurated fortnightly entertainments around a camp fire which provides a setting at once simple, easy to arrange, and calculated to strike the adolescent imagination. Each of the four houses into which the Montessori School is divided produces in rotation an entertainment which amounts to a series of skits and playlets, most of them not written but composed verbally as the action requires, as in a charade.

The night was a little misty, but the moon, the constellations, and even a shooting star or two, filled the Montessori compound with a white light which contrasted with the scarlet of a good flaming bonfire of faggots. Do Indians appreciate how lucky they are in always being able to depend on dry wood to flame beautifully? In temperate climates, damp logs make a camp fire a chancy affair, requiring kerosene and other artificial aids to brilliance.

What struck me about the programme was that all its six items were parodies or comments on small town or village life, *i.e.*, on the social circumstances with which the boys were familiar in their holidays. It was significant that the players were not concerned (as often happens in conventional school entertainment) with rajahs, princesses, and unrealistic fantasies, but with the world around them, and that they were ready to impersonate people of such humble castes as water-carriers and sweepers. There were also many local jokes, allusions to masters' idiosyncrasies, and so on, which were good humoured and implied excellent relations between masters and boys. This point is worth stressing because whereas such leg-pulling is an accepted commonplace in every

British school, it is less usual in India, where schools are more conscious of the formal relationship between teacher and taught which keeps each in his respective place and makes *camaraderie* on equal terms more difficult.

For the opening item, there ran on to the space between us and the blazing fire, a dozen boys of assorted sizes. The biggest, representing a village school master, wore a pork-pie shaped hat with sequins upon it which glittered in the firelight. He had spectacles on his nose, and carried a stick. Calling the others to him in a rough and unpleasant way, the master sat on a chair. When the students had squatted around him in a semi-circle, he began asking them ridiculous questions, making them stand up and sit down, and whacking them if they did not answer at once. Aloof, behind him, stood a poorly dressed boy who watched but took no part in the class; he was the village "bad boy" who was playing truant. The master whacked and shouted, the boys answered, or burst into noisy tears (which caused much laughter among the audience). Finally, when all the boys were crying, the bad boy pulled the master's chair from beneath him and he sat on the ground with an audible thump. He looked so surprised that I suspected that this effect had been rehearsed a trifle differently. The tears of the pupils turned to laughter. The bad boy removed the spectacles from the prostrate master and put them on his own nose at an absurd angle. The master struggled up and made for the bad boy who dodged round the bonfire. The class chased the master away and returned to find the bad boy seated in the master's chair already asking questions :

Bad boy : "What is a donkey ?"
All : (delighted howls) : "The Master ! The Master !"
Bad boy : "Who is as ugly as a camel ?"
All (as before) : The Master ! The Master!"
And so on.

Next, a tall slim boy of 13, dressed as a Marwari peasant, strode in pretending to smoke a clay pipe, held, in the characteristic Indian way, in the palm of his hand. This was Om Prakash Misra, a local boy who comes from a poor home and is one of eight brothers, and who, in 1952, had been in the school for nine years. From the beginning, his talent for writing verse and music, and for singing, had been recognised and encouraged. Tonight, he sang ironically of the joys of smoking. This was a good humoured hit at the number of cigarettes that Mr. Raman smokes in a day. What

was striking was the ease and naturalness with which he lounged up and down (as would the peasant whom he was imitating) mimicking the words as he half sang, half shouted them in the characteristic country way. I reflected that I was witnessing an unusual spectacle in any school in any country, namely, a 13 year old boy holding the attention of an audience with a song that he had written and composed himself. As he went off, I saw his lean and immature features silhouetted against the flames; his turbaned head was uplifted and his mouth wide open in the final note of the refrain. There was something moving in the self-confidence of that fresh young personality.

The first item had been a burlesque of a village school; now, following Om Prakash, came a skit on their own school: *a parivar** of boys entered. They began discussing their lessons, poking fun at foibles and easily recognisable traits in their teachers. These local jokes were received with delight and the climax came when one of the actors uttered the line : "And you can always go along to Mr. Raman for a lecture on Faith, Knowledge, and Action (the school motto) !" This was greeted with roars of laughter, in the midst of which Mr. Raman whispered to me : "This is all invaluable guidance for me about what's going on in their minds." I have no doubt that all of it was full of psychological significance to the initiated, but what impressed me again was the good feeling that it showed between the staff and school. When a relationship between groups, or between individuals, will stand friendly banter, there cannot be much wrong with it. It is on the contrary, when everyone is on his dignity, that there is no dignity but only bad temper on the part of the staff, countered by sulkiness from the boys.

The next item concerned a group of villagers, a local official, and beggar. The villagers bustled around the pompous figure of the official (his khaki *topi* and his dark glasses symbolising authority), laughing, talking, gesticulating. Among them was a beggar; stooping, half-naked, he held out a pathetically curved hand. Creeping painfully about, his small figure, silhouetted against the leaping yellows of the bonfire and the yellow-greys of the drifting smoke, contrasted with the vigorously moving crowd. The villagers had no money but offered the beggar clothes, which he ostentatiously

* Each house of the school is sub-divided into *parivars*, or "families". A boy remains with the same *parivar* throughout his time at the school The elder boys look after the small boys and help them to wash and to dress

refused : The more that they offered him clothes, the more he insisted on money. In the end, he allowed himself to be persuaded and clothes of all kinds were piled upon him. The *topi* was knocked off the official's head. Someone sat on it, thus collapsing "authority" with a satisfying crunch. The beggar dressed himself in all the clothes, and strode off, bashed *topi* on his head, dark glasses on his nose, half a dozen shirts and scarves around his shoulders, and one leg in a pair of trousers which gradually slid to his feet, until it dragged behind him in the dust at each step. As he exited, he brandished a stick and cried : "Now you will all be my servants."

The clothes had been the beggar's real object all the time, and his initial refusal was bluff. The farce's Chaplinesque idea was that of the little man getting the better of society and officialdom by his wits. "Clothes make the man" was its satirical moral. Once the beggar had secured the good clothes, he was the master of them all.

After another item or two, Om Prakash Misra returned with a friend, Ram Antar, to do the smash-hit of the evening. This was the impersonation of a couple who are supposed to have left their native village for the big city where they have (by village standards) made their fortune, and now, well satisfied with themselves, they are re-visiting their village. The views about village life of those who live in cities are conditioned by what they read in books written by other city dwelling literates. Since the average villager is illiterate and does not express himself with ease before "intellectuals", the latter are apt to go through life pitying the poor villager, without an inkling of the impression that they create on him. I would have given much to have Om Prakash Misra and Ram Antar sing their song before a gathering of social workers in New Delhi, because it shows exactly what the villager thinks of the townsmen.

Om Prakash Misra enters attired as a well-to-do *banya* with a coloured *pagri* and a fat cushion-belly under his clean white shirt with glittering buttons. He is accompanied by his wife, wearing a beautiful scarf. They are so full of finery that the villagers do not recognise them as former neighbours. They therefore identify themselves as "Jhoontia's aunt and uncle." They interpret the gasp that goes up from the villagers on hearing this as admiration and envy, and they swagger and are condescending. But the gasp is one of amazement, scorn, and ridicule, and the more the couple strut, the funnier they seem to the villagers. One suspects that Jhoontia is

somebody of particularly low caste which would make the city airs and graces of the aunt and uncle seem even more ridiculous.

Om Prakash's words, given below, may seem crude in literal translation, but you must think of them as sung in a racy Hindi to a simple terse tune with a marked beat in four-four, embellished only by those little turns and grace-notes with which Rajput singers give variety and, incidentally, an utterly Indian character, to their often simple and always rhythmical melodies.

Jhoontia's Aunt and Uncle

Aunt : I am Jhoontia's aunt, my weight is only four tolas.
I am so light that I appear like Suraiya.
Uncle : I am Jhoontia's uncle, and my weight is eight tolas.
I am as ugly as Sethkasu, and am the son of a haberdasher[1].
Aunt : I wear plastic slippers[2] and walk with great pride.
When I cross the street, people cry.
'There goes the second wife of old Rameswar :
Uncle : I wear shoes of rough camel leather[3] made by the cobbler Sheonander[4].
My gait is as dignified as a water buffalo.
Aunt : My beloved[5] husband is sixty years' old, and wears a heavy turban.
He is so vain that even in the sun he wears too many clothes.
Uncle : My darling is only twenty[6] years old, and she has beautiful curly hair.
She wears a fine *sari* with a beautiful petticoat underneath.
Aunt : In my childhood I used to collect cow-dung
And fetch two vessels of water from a distant well.
But now I live in Bombay and am a complete *sethani*[7].
Uncle : I was the dirtiest child in the village.
I was a beehive : my nose ran, and so did my eyes.
The flies that came to settle I slew with my staff.

[1] Haberdashers are not found in Indian villages, and are therefore symbolic of city frills
[2] The latest new-fangled nonsense.
[3] i e , of good quality
[4] A local character of low caste.
[5] Ironical
[6] Ironical
[7] Wife of a rich seth.

In those days I carried a spade instead of this ivory-handled walking stick. Now I am modern and up-to-the-minute.

Any good music hall turn is a comment upon the contemporary scene : an affectionate recognition, or a criticism. One does not usually expect such social comment from schoolboys, but is that not merely because most of us are inclined to be patronising with boys and not to take them seriously? Far from resenting schoolboy comments, one ought, I submit, to encourage them, and to provide a sensible outlet for them, as does the Birla Montessori School. By doing so, the school is developing their capacities for organisation, co-operation and above all, for imagination, poetry, and constructive thinking.

But these Camp Fires are not just education, they're fun. A grand time is had by all !

And so to bed.

ENVOI

My last memory of the Montessori School is of a yellow evening sky glowing through the library windows while Bharat Vyas plays his *sarode.*

It was not a mental hygiene period but one of the regular poetry and music sessions that Mr. Raman has inaugurated to provide the boys with adult standards in order to cultivate their powers of critical appreciation.

Bharat Vyas had been preceded by a poet, Durej Parmeshwar, who had recited his own verses in Hindi, some grave, some gay. If I mention only the gay, it is because the drift of their meaning was easier for me to catch, but I do not wish to leave the impression that the lighter moments were given undue prominence in what was a varied and balanced programme. I remember a cheerful poem about a fat man, who kept on getting fatter; first, he is as fat as a *rassagula;* then as a *lota;* and he grew and grew until he became as round as a football. I remember another poem which contained a hit at schoolmasters, and the poet turning, in the manner of a Paris *chansonnier,* to rib Mr. Raman in the audience. But whereas in the 1920's at the Théatre de l'Humour, or the Théatre des Deux Anes, the audience took these friendly insults meekly and rarely attempted a riposte, Mr. Raman shouted back gaily and excitedly. I don't know who got the better of the exchange, but from the laughter

of both men and of all the boys, it was clear that the encounter was joyous.

Then Bharat Vyas picked up his *sarode*, and his fingers began to wander over the strings, stirring up faint mysterious echoes in fractional tones and curious rhythms. His eyes were closed and he seemed to be listening with every pore to the strange instrument across his lap. Suddenly he laughed aloud. He seemed to have heard what he had been listening for. He rose on one knee, and while his now flying fingers seemed to attack all the strings at once, he darted provocative glances round the room, alighting on individuals, now here, now there. Whereas the Viennese gypsy violinist wanders round playing sentimentally to his patrons, Bharat Vyas issued challenges; "What about this?" he laughed, striking handfuls of sparkling notes at us. "How's that?", he followed up with sweep after sweep of rippling cascades. He held you with an incomplete chord...captivating... tantalising...the rhythm was strong, even violent...then, as suddenly, there was a new chord and a new rhythm. The *tempo* of the performance and the music alike was heightened and quickened.

Bharat Vyas had us all—boys, masters, visitors—sitting up, smiling, our eyes dancing, our bodies swaying, until our pent-up emotions broke out in shouts of *shabash* *! I caught Vyas' eye as it roved triumphantly over his entranced listeners, and I signalled my enjoyment. He responded at once by throwing up his head and letting loose a passage of such virtuosity as to defy any attempt to translate it from the medium of music into words. He sounded like an entire Russian balalaika orchestra at the frenzied climax of a show number.

* "Well done"!

CHAPTER IX

THE BIRLA BALIKA VIDYAPEETH

MRS. DEVAKI UPADHAYA, principal of the Vidyapeeth, is not one of those repressed thin-lipped disciplinarians, the memory of whose unforgiving personality is capable of evoking in her pupils years after they have gone out into the world, borne children themselves and even become grandmothers, feelings of guilt, fear, and awe.

Whether faced with a nervous parent or one of the many distinguished visitors who are attracted to the school—Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Indian Union used to come to visit his two granddaughters ; Prime Minister Nehru has attended a House party, and the late Deputy Premier, Vallabhbhai Patel, found time to address the girls—Mrs Upadhaya, little and plump, comes forward to greet them with smiling ease.

She laughs without difficulty. If laughter did not exist, Devaki Upadhaya would be the first person to spot the necessity of inventing it. The warmth and happiness that radiates from her conceal the agile mind, the lightning calculations, and the wide learning of this small lady from South India. I see her sitting indolently in a comfortable chair in her living room, wearing a Madrassi *sari* of glowing shot silk, green and magenta, while her enchanting little son, four year old Ravi, his nose six inches from his mother's face, tells her in the Malayalam tongue a long, long, story, requiring much gesture. Every shade of expression passes across the child's face as he relates all that happened—ending in a hoarse whisper into her ear. But this apparent indolence covers a personality which quails before no man and which schemes with equal success for the organisation of a school *tamasha* like the fair,* or for the acquisition of some necessity for her school which the authorities may be slow in producing. The authorities—but why disguise them ? Pandeji and G. D. Birla—find it easier to give way before Mrs. Upadhaya's attacks and the desired objects invariably make their appearance.

Mrs. Upadhaya pays as much attention to the welfare of her staff as of her pupils. She realises that a happy and adjusted group of teachers can do more for the girls than the

* See page 216

principal by herself. It is to the girls' benefit that they should be in the charge of willing, companionable, women. From close contacts and friendships between teachers and pupils, the girls learn values and ideas of behaviour outside their childish experience, and the school from being a chance collection of individuals, develops, through these relationships, which breed loyalty and uncover common interests, a corporate life of its own. It is because Mrs. Upadhaya believes that it is through friendly insight that the "impossible" girl is finally absorbed into the body politic, and the wretchedly unhappy discovered, that she enlists the interest of a housekeeper, or a particular teacher, in her desire to influence or to help a pupil. Part of the secret of her success is her readiness to delegate authority. Having picked her staff carefully and satisfied herself that they know their jobs, she gives them general directions and leaves them to work out the details. The results justify her. "Really, my teachers!" she said to me once with a sigh of pride and gratitude, "they give me a hundred per cent."

One of the points of contrast between the Vidyapeeth and the average girls' school in Britain, France, or America, is the prominent part of the school background that is filled by family life. Most Western women teachers are unmarried, but the little row of teachers' houses in the Vidyapeeth compound contains a variety of families—old married couples with their children out in the world returning for visits; younger couples with babies; mothers of teachers, brothers of teachers, sisters of teachers. Thus, the girls of the Vidyapeeth, unlike the Western girl who spends the years of her school life divorced from many realities, are brought up among the sights, sounds, and feelings, the happinesses and the sadnesses, of family life. In this, the Vidyapeeth girls have a whole range of splendid experience added to their school years.

A variety of women come under Mrs. Upadhaya's rule. In addition to the teachers, and to 240 school girls of all ages between eight and eighteen from all parts of India, there are the housekeepers and matrons whose functions differentiate them from the teaching staff; then there are several elderly village women who act as messengers and helpers. Nor are the sweeper women who do the school's heavy cleaning excluded from Mrs. Upadhaya's interest, and many are the tales, grave and gay, that they provide, and the troubles that they bring to her for solution. The tall village woman who

answers the door, who holds herself like a grenadier, comes from a family of potters, and gets her sons and uncles to make all the *chatties* needed by the Vidyapeeth for their pottery decoration classes. The grimness of her wrinkled face hides an annually recurring sorrow : her daughter's babies have all died as soon as they were born. While I was there the sixth, a boy, had survived seven weeks, and it looked as if he had gathered sufficient strength to live.

Another character of the countryside did chores for the housekeepers. She was 75 years old, had every tooth in her head, and wore such finery one holiday that everyone chaffed her saying :

"Ho, there, Chunia! We are to lose you? Is it an elopement? By camel? Now don't get mixed up with some city slicker."

Chunia laughed and said she was off to Delhi, and would stay there as long as she could. Nobody believed her, of course, until week after week went by and they began to realise that she had meant it. She found the big city such fun that she was always staying on "just one more day," until her exasperated Delhi relatives finally pushed her on to a train back to Pilani.

A connoisseur of colourful character and herself a past-mistress of the unexpected, Mrs. Upadhaya loves to keep everyone lively with stories about some "slice of life" as it is lived outside the school walls.

Besides Mr. L. C. Vidyarti the school secretary, the only man who has any function within the walls is Lukku Singh, the *chowkidar*, who rides in on his camel every evening from his village five miles away. One day he came with a saga of distress about a cow that had been stolen from relatives. Day by day he recounted in detail the latest news of their search for miles around. At last, he brought the joyful news that the young wife of the family had tracked the missing beast to a village 12 miles distant and driven it home triumphant. From well to well she had walked gathering news of the movements of cattle and asking for her spotted cow. At last, she saw it in a village street, and raised such a clamour that the very vehemence of her accusations and imprecations had shamed and alarmed the villagers into restoring it to her. Typical of Devaki Upadhaya was the instant homily that she gave the *chowkidar* :

"You see!" she flashed up at his formidable figure. "Is it not as I have always said? Five of you men are not worth

one woman. Do you think I believe that ridiculous story about all those husbands and fathers and brothers who went looking for the cow? Stuff! As soon as they were out of sight of your village, they just stretched out to sleep under the nearest tree. What could you expect? It took the young wife's brains to find the cow, and her courage to overawe the thieves."

The *chowkidar* stood with his hands respectfully at his sides, but his expression conveyed in rapid succession alarm and amusement, incredulity and indignation. By the time that he had thought of a reply Mrs. Upadhaya had gone. He, like so many others, had been taken unawares and was left tongue-tied.

"*Bevkoof!*"* I have heard her snort of someone who had underestimated her. "What does he think I am?"

Mrs. Upadhaya's command of language, as much as her courage, once saved her life. In the early days when she was as yet the sole occupant of the row of teachers' houses, and when Ravi was only a few months old, she awoke in the night to see three men, armed with *lathis,* on the verandah where she was sleeping. One was bending over Ravi's cot and she thought at once of kidnappers. Without hesitation, she leaped from her bed and shrieked for the *chowkidar,* who should have been within earshot. Two of the men swung round on her with raised sticks, but, like Kipling's Mother Wolf when Sher Khan the tiger dared to put his head in at her lair to claim Mowgli, Mrs. Upadhaya let loose such a flow of fury, as heedless of them she ran to pick Ravi up, that they fell back, daunted. Quick to follow up this establishment of moral supremacy, she further flustered the intruders by looking towards the neighbouring house and calling out a man's name, ending up : "Ah! There you are at last, you old slow-coach! Run for the *chowkidar* who must be asleep next door."

The three men left hurriedly by the way they had come—over the wall—and Mrs. Upadhaya, clutching the ever sleeping Ravi, stumbled through the darkness to rouse the snoring *chowkidar,* who had made himself cosy on the school verandah a long way off and had heard nothing. Compared with the thieves, the *chowkidar* was at a disadvantage—he could not escape Mrs. Upadhaya's wrath.

* *Bevkoof* means "fool" but achieves far more than the English word. With plumped cheeks, an explosive force can be put into the initial "Bev" that, followed up with a guttural and contemptuous "koof", will rattle any adversary.

When I think of the Vidyapeeth, I think first of its enormous sun-baked compound, characteristic of so much in developing, pioneering, Pilani, where, before your eyes, you can see the desert being driven back on all sides. Already in the campus, along the approach to the girls' school, we met strings of camels, each carrying ten maunds* of building stones, balanced in 5-maund wooden hods on either side of their backs, which they piled into enormous heaps by the road. Layer upon layer of paving stones filled the footpath. Perspiring, whitened, labourers paused in unloading cement from lorries to stare as we passed. Teams of minute donkeys, their bent hocks scraping as they moved under the weight, brought sacks of earth to level the ground. Women, gaily coloured bodices soaked in sweat, circular skirts swinging to measured tread, clusters of silver anklets tinkling above bare feet, bore rubble away in baskets on their heads. Skilled masons, whose grave and distinguished mien contrasted with the rough coolies about them, sat in a bespectacled row shaping stones for arches. There was hardly room to walk as you picked your way through the medley.

All this was for the Vidyapeeth's new hostel.

Part of the Vidyapeeth compound is a playground, part is orchard and kitchen garden; part is finished, elegant, formal; and part is still a dusty, sandy waste.

Large groups of buildings cluster down two adjacent sides; the dining hall with its outdoor taps and stone basins for hand-washing before and after meals, and its cook-house attached, stands apart. Here, out of doors, Mrs. Kapur, the benign and smiling head housekeeper, who learned to cook in a wealthy Punjabi household where they understood good food, bakes delicious Punjabi bread and other delicacies in a magnificent underground oven. Like all good cooks, she cannot resist trying to please friends and visitors, as well as her girls, so that her corner, outside the cook-house, has a group of *gourmandes*, young and old, round it several times a week, tasting and watching (mostly tasting).

As you walk down the garden, pass, first, the newly fini-

* The maund is the weight common all over India, but how much these camels carried I do not know In the State of Uttar Pradesh, for example, there are not only almost as many different maunds as there are articles to weigh, but the maund of sugar is said to weigh 48½ seers in Kanpur, 40 in Muttra, 72½ in Gorakhpur, 40 in Agra, 50 in Moradabad, 43½ in Saharanpur, 50 in Bareilly, 46 in Fyzabad, 48½ in Shahjehanpur, and 51 in Goshangunge The railway maund weighs 82 2/7 lbs, the factory maund 74 lbs 10 oz. 11drs and the Bombay maund 28 lbs; the Madras maund is estimated (*sic*) at between 24 and 25 lbs.

shed hostels on your right, and then the half built one, until you see opposite you the oldest building—the first school opened in 1941. Amidst trees, shrubs, and flowers, you turn along this one-storied building, discover a fountain, and come upon the girls' gardens stretching away. Each garden is enclosed by a little irrigation ditch, and as the cold weather progresses, a variety of vegetables and flowers are grown with varying degrees of success. You picture the practical, successful householder-in-the-making when you find a small garden bursting with cabbages, carrots, spinach, and *mouly* (an enormous kind of radish). Another displays a carefully thought out pattern of flowers. Some grow rose trees; others tall hollyhocks. Some of the little ones' gardens are nearly bare, with perhaps three marigolds and a cornflower leaning drunkenly against some exhausted spinach.

Beyond is the white, two-storied, main school with broad verandahs travelling the length of both floors. Another building containing the school hall, stage, and art room, juts out into the garden. All down the end of this side of the compound the houses of the teachers look over the top of a high garden wall which is flanked by a wide flower-bed. The only break in the wall is the door to the house of the principal, Mrs. Upadhaya. A bright electric light on a bracket burns outside all night as a beacon guide in case someone should need her. The other little houses open their doors out into the road at the back; thus, they have privacy, yet at the same time are a part of the Vidyapeeth compound and its activities.

One of my happiest pictures of Pilani was framed by the Vidyapeeth's big gate which, guarded by two miniature gatehouses for the *chowkidars,* looks across to the sweepers' colony of thatched huts. When the night *chowkidar* arrives on his camel for duty from his village, he builds a fire of twigs by the wall. The camel folds itself comfortably up alongside and waits for something to eat; if the *chowkidar* goes out of sight, the camel turns its head anxiously this way and that; its eyes were damaged by stone-throwing children, so that it is pitifully dependent upon its master and bellows bubblingly if he is too long absent.

The *chowkidars* of Rajasthan are a race apart, as is to be expected in a land where dacoits, cattle-thieves, and other ride-by-nights, have always been and still are commonplaces. *Chowkidars* are chosen for their reliable character and fine physique. Few peasants in India can afford good clothes, so that *chowkidars* stand out by their solid apparel, usually

khaki uniforms from surplus army stores given them by grateful (or prudent) employers. All carry brass-bound bamboo *lathis* (staves). Wrapped in their winter blankets and crowned by their vast *pagris,* Rajasthan *chowkidars* are imposing figures of rustic dignity. The distance of a cry spaces them around a property or the village lands. At intervals throughout the night they give a long uncanny shout to keep each other awake. You, in your bed, lie and listen: "Ah! There he goes. Now wait . . . No reply. Govind must be asleep. No, there *he* goes." And you hear the remote reply drift across the starry, misty desert, while the jackals send a thrill up your spine as they shriek their midnight hunting call —is it in despair or triumph?

Vidyapeeth *Chowkidar* was a friend of ours. He often came after dark to fetch Ravi when sleep had overcome him during our long fireside chats with his mother.

"Ao, ao, babaji. Babaji, ao," he would say gently, as he lifted Ravi off the divan to carry him home. This was not just an old man's tenderness towards a child; it was an essential precaution. The North Indian winter's day is pleasantly warm in the sun; the air has the crisp tang of an English autumn, presage of the bitter bone-piercing cold that envelops the land at dusk. But warm patches linger beneath the trees, or in sheltered folds of the ground, and here pie-dogs curl up to sleep. Stumble upon them in the dark, and adult or child, you may be badly bitten with all the risks of hydrophobia (countered by a particularly painful stomach inoculation) thrown in.

One night it was we who were walking home from the Vidyapeeth, and Ravi started to accompany us. But he could not be got past *Chowkidar.* The crouching camel chewing branches and green leaves, its grotesque jaw rotating within a foot of its master's face, the smoky light from the little gate-house door, and the swathed figures, darkly grouped around the flickering fire, and (not least) the hot *chapattis* that they all shared, Ravi found irresistible. He squatted between two large men, his dark curl-covered head as high as their elbows, and we left them all, so simple and so content, glimmer-lit, and munching in the misty chill.

It is this peaceful corporate life within the gates, its back to the world, so much a part of girls' education in India, that I find attractive. Let who must face outwards, like the squares at Waterloo, I find an enclosed space fruitful in sug-

gestions of the strength implicit in a community life, or perhaps its appeal is as a frame for our own selves, if we are fortunate enough to live within. The ancient hill top forts also had an enclosure to shelter the herds and the outlying members of the tribe who came flocking for protection from the enemy. Enclosed life there was, too, in great walled cities glowing in the night, beacons of strength and civilisation, in savage landscapes. As the Norman keeps gave up their fierce monolithic aspect and evolved into concentric castles, the women came, and stayed. Along the battlements above the private chambers they ranged flower pots; and their children played in the bailies and among the fruit trees. The quads of Oxford, and the courts of Cambridge, live in memory over sea and continent, and in poetry over the centuries; and besides, the gossips that we all are feel wonderfully satisfied when a glance out of the window gives us all the latest news.

In the delightful climate of Northern India's cold weather, almost every activity is carried on out of doors. There, in the compound, are girls changing lesson periods; teachers' voices expound and question; a class recites in unison; there is Rajan, the peon woman, chasing away a couple of pie-dogs; there are a group of girls scattering to the privacy of their bedrooms to read newly received letters; a P. T. class flashes in the white shirts and jodhpurs of the Vidyapeeth uniform, their blue scarves tight across their flat little chests; a fresh, crude, young voice soars above the zithar and drums from the music lesson in the hall across the way. Doors and windows wide-flung, the polished floors of the old central building catch the sunlight; there are glimpses of the matrons moving in the dormitories; each girl has a bed, a locker, and her own padlocked metal trunk that she brings to school. Earthenware drinking-water jars are here and there upon tables and chests. The variety of gay bedspreads shows that each girl has brought her own from home, embroidered by herself or her mother.

As you cross the threshold of the Vidyapeeth hall, a large geometrical wheel of conventional flower designs, gaily colour-washed across the floor and renewed periodically by the girls themselves, cheers an otherwise austere entrance. Time was when every girl in India prided herself on being able to draw these wheels in traditional welcome to an honoured guest or a returning parent or relative; and the Vidyapeeth

is thus doing its part in keeping this gracious custom alive.*

Through the hall is the school sitting room out of which opens Mrs. Upadhaya's study. Here parents wait to interview the principal; here the staff gathers when some distinguished visitor is to be received; here are served enormous and scrumptious teas when suitable pretexts occur. The cushions of the numerous chairs and sofas are all embroidered by the pupils: a wealth of design and colour, some Indian, some Western, all showing high technical achievement. There were vases full of flowers, and, as we waited, a girl bustled in, seized two, and disappeared, to return in a moment with fresh blooms.

The office that this girl performed is a part of the system of duty and discipline which devolves upon the girls themselves, so that the teachers and matrons do little more than advise the various committees and prefects, when requested. Discipline in class naturally depends upon the teacher, but every class room is prepared and cleared up, lesson by lesson, by the class monitors.

Mrs. Upadhaya has divided her school up into four Houses, to which, as they join the school, the girls are allotted to make as varied groups as possible. Marks are given for all activities and credited to the House—marks for discipline, tidiness, cleanliness, games, gardens, and for the best House party (entertainment). At the end of the year a House cup is awarded.

The school captain and vice-captain are elected from the top class by the whole school. The vice-captain inherits from the captain if she leaves. Each House elects its own captain and vice-captain. Each takes turns to run the school for a month.

Each House elects a Mess Committee who, with the matron's help, plan the menus of the whole school for their month. The Committee discuss their housekeeping problems each week, and consult with the housekeeper about the week's orders. Then, daily, during the hour before school, when "duties" are being performed, the Mess Committee go to their store cupboard and dole out the supplies, *atta* (whole wheat flour), sugar, etc.; they see that the cook-boys are cleaning and preparing the vegetables properly; and they stack the trays ready for use in the dining room.

* All who saw the film of Rumer Godden's book, *The River*, may remember that the first image flashed upon the screen on which the title, names of the artists, technicians, etc, were superimposed, was one of these wheels in flower design.

At meal times, Committee members take turns to serve second helpings. First helpings are placed before each girl on the rectangular trays with six shallow depressions, which are the Vidyapeeth's modern stream-lined version of the circular, wooden tray of Indian tradition, on which each dish is served in a separate bowl. These trays enable the whole meal to be served at once as in a cafeteria.

Each House Mess Committee can vary the menu as they choose, provided that they do not exceed the budget. Thus, one Mess Committee may delight in hot curries. The successor Committee may pride themselves on their sweets. Another may specialise in the Indian equivalent of "plain, wholesome food, my dears"—*dhai* (sour milk), *chapattis* made with *atta,* and plenty of vegetable dishes. One Mess Committee heard, and obeyed, Pandit Nehru's broadcast appeal to the well-to-do to forgo rice dishes as long as the rice scarcity persists. Besides being valuable experience, it is fun for an earnest student of hygiene and dietics to be able to try out on her fellow-students the theories that she has learnt in class, although it is only fair to point out that each Committee's menus are subject to the approval of the housekeeper, who unobtrusively ensures that whatever the variety, or vagary, a proper balance of diet is observed.

Thus, the Vidyapeeth girls not only learn cooking and household organisation but how to tackle catering for large numbers. Mrs. Upadhaya says that her mess bills are about Rs. 38 to Rs. 45 per girl per month, and that everyone is amply nourished, right down to "extras" such as sweets and other delicacies. Compare this with Rs. 55 to Rs. 60 for the Pilani College boys and with the Rs. 95 at the International Hostel at Banaras University. Mrs. Upadhaya boasts that a few sensible women, and a few scullions, can accomplish what the horde of cooks' boys and waiters who infest the kitchens of men's colleges will never do.

One elected House 'hostel" committee is responsible each month for the order and cleanliness of the hostels; another for the school buildings. The sitting room is kept looking nice, the flowers arranged, the floor paintings maintained, and, not least, the furniture is polished. Every part of the school is managed in this way by elected, *ad hoc* committees, so that by the time lessons begin at 10 a.m. all is in order.

Every girl from the VIth class up to the top Xth has a duty to perform.

Each House captain has a position of great responsibility.

She must see that law and order is maintained in the hostels. She must see that the members of the House Committee are conscientious in their care of the under-seven-year-olds whom they help to dress and to feed. She must see that a girl who may be confined to her room with illness for a few days is being properly nursed and she must report on the patient's progress and needs. The Vidyapeeth's discipline is so good that when Mrs. Kapur, the head housekeeper, had to take leave for an operation the routine ran as smoothly as ever in her absence.

The class monitors who fetch books, collect material, prepare the class room for the lesson, and hand it over to the next class as clean and tidy as they found it, are elected by the girls, although the staff reserves a rarely used right of veto.

When the new buildings are finished, the House captains and vice-captains will have separate rooms like the seniors' studies in English girls' schools, in which they can retire for work during the week and can entertain girls and staff at weekends.

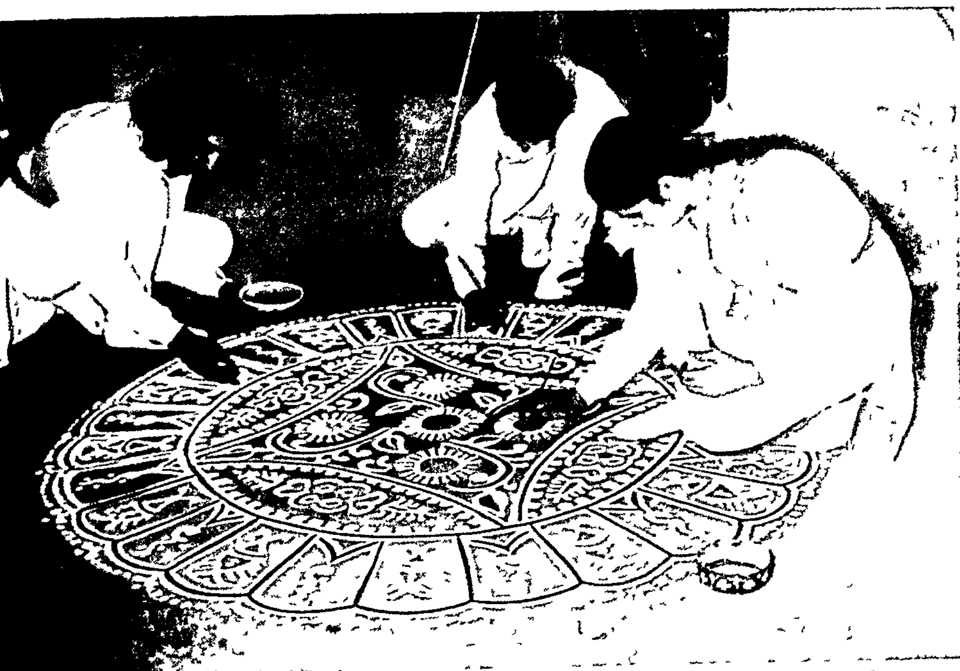
It is thus clear that Mrs. Upadhaya is a strong believer in self-government and in delegated responsibility from an early age, perhaps all the more so, because she knows that she is doing pioneer work amongst those in her charge, who are almost without exception first generation school girls. Most of their mothers are uneducated in the scholastic sense; many are illiterate. There is no tradition of education among women in Rajasthan, such as there is in the South, so that girls come to Pilani without any practical advice from their mothers, and with no preparation for life in an institutional community.

Partly by accident and partly by design, two markedly different types of girl meet and mingle in the Balika Vidyapeeth. The Birla family, which gives its name to the Birla Education Trust, are Marwaris, frequently miscalled a caste, but really a Rajasthan clan from Jodhpur, adjoining the Shekawati district of Jaipur in which Pilani is situated. The Marwaris, like the Parsees, have distinguished themselves by their outstanding abilities in business, and in every part of India in which there are concentrations of industry, trade, or commerce, you find Marwaris strongly represented. It is natural that Marwaris from all over India should wish to send their daughters to a school situated in their home country and run under the auspices of one the most distinguished members

of their community. It would, therefore, not have been surprising if the Vidyapeeth had been filled entirely with the daughters of the wealthy. What would be surprising in most countries and what, in view of India's sharp social divisions, is remarkable in the Vidyapeeth is that side by side with girls who arrive at the school accustomed to every luxury, and imbued with the somewhat exclusive social outlook of the higher caste Indian, are girls from the poorest homes. The cleavage in thought and outlook between these two types of girls is wider in India than the average Westerner (particularly the American with his tradition of the village school attended by the children of the whole community) can appreciate—indeed, the cleavage has hitherto been regarded as unbridgeable, and the Vidyapeeth is doing pioneer work in bringing together two groups who have nothing in common save a total lack of previous education.

If the presence of girls from wealthy homes arose from the accident of circumstances, the recruitment of girls from poor homes is a considered policy. G. D. Birla's fundamental aim in all the Trust's schools and colleges is to build up citizens of a modern democratic state, in which, while all that is fine in the Indian way of life has been preserved, the weaknesses arising from social divisions have been eliminated. G. D. Birla therefore reserves a substantial number of places in the Vidyapeeth (as in the other schools) for children of parents who cannot afford any fees. Applications for these free places are received from all over Rajasthan, and indeed from all parts of India, and candidates are selected by tests of worth, need, and suitability. The identities and exact numbers of these free entrants are rightly kept confidential but they form a substantial percentage.

In 1950, G. D. Birla accepted 26 girls from one of the Government of India's refugee rehabilitation centres. The Government paid Rs. 25 a month towards the maintenance of these waifs and orphans of the great disasters that attended the partition of the sub-continent in 1947. Before their eyes, some had seen their parents and families killed, and their homes destroyed. They had escaped by running from the inferno of the blazing, looted villages to hide in the standing crops or in the jungle. They had drifted to refugee camps—at first mere unorganised agglomerations of the starving, bewildered, homeless, and chance-met, until gradually the Government began to get the upper hand of the catastrophe and to organise rehabilitation centres.



76. "As you cross the threshold, a geometrical wheel of flower designs, gaily colour-washed across the floor, cheers an otherwise austere entrance" See page 204



77 'The Domestic Science room is fitted with cooking tables, cupboards, and a platform, in an alcove to contain the stove" See page 212

78 The girls are taught on the same kind of stoves that they will find in their homes Picture shows one of four types used. Note white drill uniform over sari See page 212

79. Mrs Upadhaya and Ravi ' If laughter did not exist Mrs. Upadhaya would have been the first person to spot the necessity of inventing it". See page 197



80 When the night Chowkidar arrives on his camel for duty from his village, he builds a fire of twigs by the wall See page 202



81 "Ho, there Chunia! Is it an elopement?" See page 199



82. "I was garlanded by two little girls with lovely wreaths that they had themselves prepared." See page 220



83 Some of Miss Pushkar's sewing students Besides clothes to wear, they make embroidered tea cosies, blouses, sachets, etc. Some specimens in background



84. Miss Gidwani, teacher of Home Economics and Dancing See page 212



85. Concentration

86 Pioneering Pilani : building a swimming pool for the Vidyapeeth

87. The Vidyapeeth compound. "Part is playground, part is an orchard and kitchen garden; part is finished, elegant, formal, and part is still a dusty sandy waste" See page 201



88 Gardening "A successful householder in the making". See page 202



89 Winner of a prize for dancing



90. A Vidyapeeth personality

Two sisters, who had clung together through all their miseries, come to my mind. Their square peasant faces looked blankly at me across the bus on the day of our picnic expedition to the banyan-tree village—a contrast to some of the beautiful and exotic types of girls by which they were surrounded. Weeks later I saw them again, on the stage during their House party. They were in a group playing the parts of village girls who sang while they drew water and ground corn in the stone hand-mill, and joked while they were teased by the village boys. They looked so happy while they sang—until they came to grinding the corn; then it was that such sadness seized their small faces that I felt shocked. Doubtless, they were surprised by memories of grinding corn with their lost mother in their far-off Punjabi home.

Western parents, used to institutional ways, are careful to ascertain the customs of a school before packing their children off to it; they consciously try to avoid that their children are made conspicuous by expensive clothes, by lavish pocket money or by anything unusual. This conception is outside the experience of average Indian parents and is contrary to their custom which is to lavish as much as they can afford on their children, especially on the girls. As a Hindu father said to me : "Our daughters marry so early and leave home so young, we like to spoil them so that they can take happy memories away with them." Whereas the Western girl is dressed in practical clothes and given no jewellery until she has left school, the Indian girl is dressed in the finest of silks, satins, and jewellery, and is petted and spoiled from her earliest years.

Mrs. Upadhaya, accordingly, has on occasion to undertake the education of parents as well as of their daughters, for she has periodically to insist that at the Vidyapeeth all are equal, with no privileges in dress, food, possessions, or activities. Some parents try to offer Mrs. Upadhaya money to be spent on their daughters; they mean no harm; they are unfamiliar with life in an institution and have never envisaged the divisions, the toadying, the envy, and the sense of injustice, that would be aroused if some girls wore jewels and richly brocaded saris, ate special foods, and engaged in activities denied to others.

Mrs. Upadhaya has cleverly attached prestige and glamour to the Vidyapeeth uniform of white cotton shirt, jodhpur trousers and blue scarf by confining its use to games and to "community" occasions like the march past on Republic day.

Their own clothes for everyday wear, allow the girls to cultivate their individual taste and self-expression.

The Vidyapeeth had experiences with under-privileged girls like those encountered by refugee organisations in all countries. It is the girls from poor rather than from wealthy homes who are apt to complain about food and to be exacting in their demands. For example, when porridge made from wheat was introduced for breakfast because rice was scarce and dear, because wheat would add variety to the cereal content of their diet, of 32 girls who refused to eat it, 29 were from poor homes. After Mrs. Upadhaya had explained that this new porridge improved their diet, the three recusants from wealthy homes returned to the dining room. Those from poor homes, on the other hand, required much more persuasion; this was perhaps because, in them, instinct may have been stronger than reason, perhaps because their experience had been limited to one basic foodgrain and they could conceive of no other as food, and also perhaps, in some cases, because personalities distorted by harsh experiences would seize the opportunity to assert themselves against authority which they identified with cruelty or injustice.

I SPENT a morning in January, 1952, watching the Vidyapeeth's classes.

I arrived early and found the girls still singing their Sanskrit hymn in the hall. The fine slow tune repeated itself several times, and the uninhibited voices of young girls, giving a slightly raucous quality to the dignified melody, reminded me of an English village school lustily engaged in something out of "Hymns Ancient & Modern:" the voices of children singing are alike in all countries of the world.

Soon the girls dispersed to their classrooms with the usual last minute scuttering about, sharpening of pencils, retrieving of rubbers, and borrowing of books. The second standard (ages 7-8) were doing sums in rupees, annas, and pies, with plenty of practice in "carrying." Miss Asha Muttoo, second daughter of Mr. T. Muttoo, headmaster of the Pilani Boys' High School, kept them all pleasantly under control. They stood to answer questions and came out of their places to get helped with corrections. I noticed a little girl who was nursing a bandaged arm that was obviously painful. I was told that she had a boil. Every now and again her companion unwittingly bumped it and made her wince; eventually they changed places of their own accord so that the hurt arm

was safely on the outside. The incident, of no importance (save to the sufferer!), was typical of the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the whole school.

Fourth standard (ages 10-11) were going over their Hygiene test of the previous month. Here are the questions:

1. How is malaria spread? What are its symptoms?
2. "Smallpox is a contagious disease which disfigures man." Comment on this.
3. What are the symptoms of plague? How is it treated?
4. How is cholera spread? What are its symptoms?
5. At what times should you have meals? If you do not chew your food, what happens?
6. What are (a) *Bhang* and (b) opium? What are their effects on addicts? Describe a typical case.
7. How should you keep your body clean? Why do clean clothes bring happiness?

This may strike a Western reader as a grim paper for such young people, but you must remember that in India scarcely a month passes without one of these scourges threatening them in their own homes, and that the Vidyapeeth girls are the first generation of women to be educated in Rajasthan. The teaching of practical hygiene, first aid, and home nursing is, therefore, amongst the Vidyapeeth's most valuable services.

The First Aid and Home Science room next to the Domestic Science room is equipped with a cradle, a life-size doll, a baby basket, brush, comb, and other nursery articles. A cupboard contains home remedies, bandages, splints, charts of the human body, and a large model of the human eye. Here Miss Hardevi Gidwani gives practical classes in first aid and home nursing.

The seventh standard (ages 12-13) were doing English "Text" from the "Rapid Reader." Miss Kamala Thambe, who as well as teaching is studying to pass her M.A. in Sanskrit at the Birla College of Arts, heard the girls read in turn. When they had finished the story of Sinbad in the valley of diamonds, Miss Thambe, who conducted the lesson in English, picked out the words "pleasant", "trembling", "climb", "enormous", and "unbind", and asked the class to make sentences up with them. Most of the girls had little difficulty, and they corrected each others' mistakes as they went along. I wonder if English or American girls of the same age could make up sentences in French with these difficult words? The parallel is perhaps not fair to the West since the Vidyapeeth gives two classes a day in English to all pupils from the 7th standard

up, but it does show what a grasp these Indian children have of a foreign language totally unlike their own in grammar and construction.

Upstairs, some older pupils were doing Sanskrit in the library.

At 11 a.m. work stopped and the whole school, having eaten nothing since milk and a nourishing Indian sweet at 7 a.m., gathered in the dining room for *hazri,* a light lunch.

In the second half of the morning, I watched a practical cooking class. The Domestic Science room is fitted with cooking tables, cupboards, and a platform, in an alcove higher than the tables, to contain the little moveable stoves, or *chulas,* which the girls use. Off the main room opens a verandah, a store room, and washing-up room, and a little dining room where the food is sampled.

Four kinds of stove, to which the girls are accustomed in their homes, are provided. The risk of the flimsy draperies of a *sari* catching fire from a cinder or an open flame is present in every Indian home and is the most frequent of domestic tragedies. Consequently, Mrs. Upadhaya has laid down the strict rule that only the three top classes get practical cookery and then only as a reward for good conduct. The girls are made to wear strong white drill pinafores which cover their saris.

Miss Gidwani, the energetic young domestic science teacher, directed the monitor who came in ahead of the class, already attired in her cooking pinafore, to get out the materials : almonds, raisins, spices, *atta* (whole wheat flour), white flour, sugar, ghee (clarified butter used as cooking fat), *basin* (ground gram), cocoanut flesh, and vegetables. The class came in, chose their stoves, took them to the verandah to light them and to blow the charcoal into flame with grass fans. As soon as the smoke abated, they brought them back to the alcove to be fanned to a red-hot glow.

With a miniature pestle, one girl pounded spices in a small brass mortar of the pretty pointed shape, like a little boat, peculiar to Pilani mortars, while another kneaded dough, and a third shredded the cocoanut flesh. Other girls were heating the *ghee* on the stoves for the frying of the *gudjias* and the making of *paratas* and vegetable *pecauris.* It is remarkable that Indian children seldom seem worried or flustered; all the girls worked quietly, while Miss Gidwani helped and corrected from time to time. There was only one real failure when a pupil who had neglected to test her ghee by first

dropping in a little of her mixture, put some food in to fry before it had reached the right temperature.

Mrs. Upadhaya joined us towards the end of the cooking lesson, and she and a few teachers sat with us round the table in the class dining room to sample the delicacies that the girls served. This little room, cared for by the monitors who prepare it daily for the serving of cooking-class snacks, is plain, but the table was covered by a bright green cloth embroidered at the corners and a bowl of flowers decorated the centre; the low wooden seats were covered by Pilani woven rugs and could be used either for sitting in European style, or for squatting in Indian style.

By the time that we rose, the class was finished, and the washing up and scouring was in progress.

A knitting class outside the Domestic Science room was visibly enjoying the smell of the cooking. Because the day was chilly, the class was being held on the broad verandah overlooking the compound; the patches of comforting sunlight were occupied by little girls all sitting cross-legged, their heads bent over wool and needles, while upon a chair Miss Pushkar, the Vidyapeeth needlework teacher, sat like a queen in their midst and picked up their dropped stitches. She is a great believer in improvisation and all her pupils are at any moment liable to be asked to invent new combinations of stitches. One jersey, knitted by a pupil for the sale of work at the School Fair,* was remarkable in its arrangement, cunning as well as colourful : the pupil had managed to make upon a white background a twisted rope of four colours with a black row on either side of it, running the length of the jersey; the twist created the illusion of a piece of coloured twine lying loose and unattached on top of the fabric.

The Vidyapeeth girls excel in embroidery. India is famous for the high standard of its women's needlework, and some of the most colourful and decorative work, as yet unspoilt by industrialised methods, is produced locally in Rajasthan. So that Miss S. Pushkar starts with the advantage of naturally apt pupils. But this alone could not account for the exceptional beauty of the embroidered satin evening bags, glass-piece embroidery, heavily smocked children's dresses, samplers, embroidered handkerchiefs, tea cosies, blouses, sachets, and jumpers and shawls knitted in complicated stitches, that term after term emerge from the Vidyapeeth's work room. Miss Pushkar's own work in soft toys—bears, giraffes, cats,

* See page 217.

dogs—is the finest craftsmanship; not a stitch can be seen, no matter how closely you look.

Miss Pushkar was educated in a Convent school and went on to obtain the Prabhakar diploma in sewing at Lahore. She told me that all her family were proud of their tradition of needlewomen. From her earliest years, she learnt to hold a needle and loved to join the women of her family at work. How strong amongst women is this urge to be doing something creative with their hands! An urge developed through millenia of drudgery and creation, beginning in the earliest inhabited caves and hovels. The men hunted, but it was the women who cured the skins and who made most of the household chattels. It was not until a settled life was possible that artisans and craftsmen arose, living by the exchange of their products. Women were the first artisans, the first craftsmen, and, no doubt, the first artists. In primitive communities to this day where the men expend their energies on hunting and warlike exercise, the women do the crafts—weaving, pottery, dyeing, curing, house-decoration, and the rest. Western women feel the urge to create with their hands as strongly as their sisters of the East. It is the girls that the great firms of Wedgwood and Spode train to decorate their choicest porcelains. The Royal School of Needlework in London employs women, whose work includes the embroidery of the Royal standards and regimental colours. Wherever there is a job that needs patience and delicacy, such as the painting of textiles or the creation of artificial flowers, women will be found.

Handwork is essential in the education of women. She who can neither make nor mend is a curiosity, an inconvenience to others and a nuisance to herself. Apart from the utilitarian or financial reasons for learning all the uses—sewing, knitting, crochet, lace-making, rug work, etc.—of a needle, too many teachers have neglected the aesthetic and psychological satisfactions of needlework. The desire to ornament and beautify is strong. Why have people taken such trouble and expense to print their cotton sheets, to embroider their garments, to decorate their jars, to colour their glasses, to engrave their swords? If the answer is not entangled with the roots of life itself, surely something so apparently irrational as beauty could never have been conceived.

It is important that girls should be given opportunity in their formative years to experiment with this work of aesthetic

creation. Too soon life will take all that they can give to others, and it is at moments when they feel the need to replenish their reserves that embroidery or smocking, knitting or crochet, rug work or weaving, can restore tired nerves and open the doors of contentment. Even if the work is only picked up once or twice a week, it will be looked forward to; and, in it, many will experience that release which creative imagination alone can give.

Mrs. Upadhaya's girls not only learn classical music and sing in the original Sanskrit, but also improvise in their own languages in the time-honoured manner of Indian musicianship.

I have never been able to understand why our Western lessons make no attempt to develop the remarkable talent for improvisation frequently displayed by young children. From the beginning, we are yoked with the harness of learning pieces by heart to the exclusion of all which does not serve towards this piece-playing. Parents are much to be blamed because they insist on a return for their money : they want to hear their children "play their pieces," so that set pieces are learnt and real knowledge and appreciation of music is too often missing. Besides a "return" in musicianship is a long-term proposition for most children. Western instruments and harmony are complicated and difficult, however simple some of their effects may appear.

But Indian musicians have devised many simple repetitive accompaniments as a ground-base upon which melody and rhythm can be improvised by voice and drum. The traditional *rag** are learnt. Thus, even young children can perform, giving pleasure to themselves and to others. At an Independence day party at Calcutta, we heard a twelve-year old girl sing a beautiful song of her own composition in praise of God, while she accompanied herself on a hand-harmonium. She sang with abstracted gaze out of the window . . . alone out of harmony was her European school uniform.

Plenty of out-door occupation is provided for the Vidyapeeth girls, and although free time is allotted, so keen is the competition to gain marks for their Houses, that the girls are never idle. Not only are their individual gardens eligible for marks, but each House is given one of the four triangles

* A *rag* is inadequately translated into English by the word "mode". For an illuminating exposition of Indian music see the article by A. H Fox Strangeways in *The Legacy of India* (Oxford University Press)

which surround a decorative path and a fountain outside the central hall. The industry displayed by each House in planting and arranging these flower beds is touching. I remember seeing them preparing their triangles for the last weeks of the cold weather when the flowers are at their best. There were three teams of perspiring girls in action, watering and planting. Usha's team worked in a grim determined silence, taking turns to carry a heavy water can back and forth from the tap to a long row of magnificent hollyhocks. Bina's team had put flower pots all round the edge of their triangle, in which flourished cherry-pie, mignonette, alyssum, and short phlox. Another triangle had a complicated system of crazy-pavement, laid with bricks, which the girls had found means to colour themselves, and they had built a bird bath in the middle of their design.

Basket ball and badminton are the Vidyapeeth games, but when there is so much pioneering to be done, and when personnel and means are not unlimited, some activities have to wait their turn. Hitherto, the building of hostels and the development of the grounds and gardens has made it difficult to allot a large space for games in the compound, but a games mistress had been engaged in 1951 and by the time that this book is published, it is likely that games will have been put on an organised basis.

And among the Vidyapeeth's outdoor activities must surely be placed the School Fair that, while I was there, was organised in aid of the Girl Guides troop which Miss Gidwani wanted to start.

The Fair was a great team-effort : the whole school and all the teachers cooperated. Stalls of needlework, toys, and vegetables, were erected in the garden around the old hostel. Dressed as a wooden soldier, banging a big drum and shouting "*Aie! Aie** !", the girl with the loudest voice in the school acted as "barker"; she was not, as you might suppose, a bouncing buxom wench, but a child of 13. Crowds from neighbouring colleges, and from the village, responded to her cries, and business was brisk among the booths, particularly the teashops. There was all the traditional uproarious noisiness of a fair—the shouts, the laughter, the clattering of tea-cups, against a background of cheerful gramophone music over the loud speakers. There were screams when a cooking pot full of *ghee* blazed upon its Primus stove; for a moment sheets of flame rose ten feet into the air over a screen of

* "Walk up! Walk up!" (Literally. "Come! Come!").

hessians and the whole Fair was stilled. But before the hessians could catch alight, some efficient but invisible person behind the screen had quenched the flames and the throngs resumed their holiday mood.

I was disappointed that the jersey with the twisted rope pattern* was just too small for my daughter, and I fell back on an embroidered tea cosy and handkerchiefs.

At the Fair, as always, the charming looks and manners of these Indian girls impressed me. They wore their own pretty *saris* and girlish jewellery, and had obviously taken trouble over their appearance. The younger girls, whose plaits had not yet grown to the length that most Indian women desire—that is to their knees—wore black tassels at the ends to make them look longer. I liked this, even in schoolgirls, and I paid no heed to the voices of my puritan ancestors crying "Vanity! Vanity!" Thank goodness, the girls were allowed that much vanity at the Vidyapeeth. Woman cannot escape the interest of man. To admit that her appearance can give pleasure is merely to recognise the facts of her life. To be at no pains to give that pleasure and to take no pleasure in it is to refuse to fulfil one of the objects of her existence. But if the grown woman is to fulfil this role gracefully and graciously, the girl must be allowed some innocent practice in an atmosphere of propriety and respect.

IN THIS AGE of universal upheaval and unsettled homes, it is inevitable that some children will come to school with distortions of personality which may hamper them and harm others. The advance in psychological knowledge since the beginning of this century has thrown a dubious light over the traditional school method of dealing with lies, petty thefts, or other moral delinquencies, by delivering a blistering homily followed by severe punishment. It is now recognised that, without engaging in clinical psychiatry, investigation of the personal history of a delinquent may reveal the causes of disharmony in his, or her, personality, and that understanding, patience, affection, and firm but sympathetic guidance, are more powerful curatives than objurgation and severity. Mild neuroses which have their origins in home and school relationships can often be diagnosed and adjusted when there is cooperation between teacher and parent. Certainly every self-respecting school in Britain and American has by now discarded the stern, old-fashioned, "eye for an eye" view of

* See page 213.

discipline. In India, on the other hand, Mrs. Upadhaya is among the rare headmistresses who are pioneering in the new methods.

One of the Vidyapeeth pupils, a girl of good family, stole persistently, often useless things that she did not need. She was motherless, and, after consultation with her father, it was ascertained that she lived with rich relatives who not only did not want her but actively disliked her. Mrs. Upadhaya, aware that a child may steal to compensate herself for what she is lacking in parental affection, persuaded the father to remove his daughter from her relatives and to keep her with him in the holidays. The girl was also given special tasks at school which brought her into a mother-daughter relationship with one of the housekeepers. By the time that she left school, the girl had ceased to steal.

Another unsatisfactory girl was found to be the daughter of a first marriage; her young stepmother neglected her most of the time and beat her when she remembered her. The girl responded to sympathetic interest at school and gained markedly in self-respect after being given responsibility which made her important in the eyes of her companions; an early marriage saved her from further ill-treatment at home.

To complete the picture, here is an example of a problem child who proved beyond the scope of school therapy: a girl delighted in cruelty to those younger than herself and was so destructive that she wrecked whole rooms. Once, she broke a lock and senselessly looted a teacher's bedroom, smashing vases, disfiguring furniture, stealing valuables. This girl had lived through the horrors of the partition of India, and was in addition the exceptionally spoilt child of a second marriage. She and her young mother queened it over the older children of the first marriage, whom they bullied. The home was poor, so that they all lived in one hut and there was no escape for any of them. The father was so much under the influence of the young wife that he never dared to protest. This pupil responded sullenly to kindly treatment at school and the climax came when she attacked and bit two girls so severely that they had to be sent to the hospital in Pilani. Mrs. Upadhaya requested the father to remove his daughter, as the girl's whole background was character deforming and there was obviously no cooperation to be expected from such parents. Such a case demands specialised treatment away from bad influences; it cannot be fitted into an ordinary school.

Mrs. Upadhaya gives non-denominational moral instruction to every class. Problems of individual conduct, and of behaviour in society, are discussed in the light of readings from the sacred texts of many religions.

A HOUSE PARTY

THE HOURS SPENT in work by the Vidyapeeth girls are not as long as those in the average European school, yet the term's schedule, laid down by the Rajasthan Board of Education, is generally finished two months ahead of time. What at first sight may seem an extraordinary feat presents no difficulty to well-taught and well-disciplined girls, such as those of the Vidyapeeth, because the terms are long and the pass requirements are, by European standards, not exacting. Nor is this a total loss, because it gives Mrs. Upadhaya's girls a generous amount of time in which to cultivate their own tastes and enjoyments, and in which they can contribute marks to their teams by the many different ploys open to them, among which is the hard work involved in organising what is a Vidyapeeth speciality—the House party.

The House parties are variety shows—playlets, sketches, song or dance numbers—written and produced by the girls themselves, with the aid of the staff, who coach the acting and advise on clothes, and lighting. The school is fortunate in having as drawing and crafts mistress Bina Devi Hamed from Santiniketan, a University famed for its interest in art and drama. In all the shows that I saw, the hand of an artist was visible in the colour schemes, in the lighting, and especially in the costumes.

A costume box, rich in old *saris*, blouses of brocade, jackets and scarves of every hue, *dhotis, pagris*, embroidered slippers, etc., has been accumulated over the years. The combined artistry of the staff and the girls created shows that I thought remarkable : the drive, initiative, and variety of talent displayed, was stimulating to one who has suffered much from the halting insipidity of the average school entertainment common in all countries.

The Vidyapeeth's forty-five minute variety shows seem to me more suitable than a long play for a large group of girls of different ages. In a full-length play, a few leading characters only have good parts, whereas in a variety show everyone has a chance of exploiting her own talent, whether it be behind the scenes as author, producer, designer, or stagehand, or in front as actor, singer, or dancer. That is why the

Vidyapeeth House parties go with such zest. Moreover, marks are taken off *for each minute over time*. And that is why these parties go with such zip !

The party that I naturally remember best was that on which, as the guest of honour, I was garlanded by two little girls with lovely wreaths of flowers that they had themselves prepared. The garlanding was an exercise in ceremonious movement as well as an artistic achievement.

Large pots of plants and flowering shrubs decorated the line of the footlights, and were massed in the centre below, leaving space for two stairways, flanked with more plants, up from the auditorium to the left and right of the stage.

Before the show began, the footlights were switched on to floodlight the dark blue curtain, and then, as the rhythmical beat of drums was heard from behind, two beautifully dressed little figures emerged in front of the curtain at the head of the stairways on either side of the stage. The two girls, about 12 years old, were wearing gorgeous Banaras *saris,* with jewellery, anklets, earrings, and bangles. Their hair was elaborately dressed, and their long plaits intertwined with fresh flowers. Round their necks were the garlands with which they were to deck me. They advanced in time to the repetitive throb of the fingerbeaten Indian drums, first, slowly down the steps, then between the girls in the audience, seated Indian fashion on the floor, towards the adults on chairs behind. As they converged from opposite sides, they wove patterns of dance movements with their arms, advancing and pausing exactly together, their bright eyes measuring their distances. Finally, as they reached me, they made an obeisance, removed the wreaths from their necks, placed them over my head, and bowed again. Backwards, they retreated with equal care and grace, to their separate stairs, the way that they had come.

India is a republic, but the Vidyapeeth, by keeping these national customs fresh and alive, is helping to ensure that it is a gracious republic. Western republicans seem to think that dignity is dangerous to their dignity, that formal manners are a threat to their equality, and that it is the mark of a sissy to bow from the waist. That the head of the state should refrain from putting his arm round a visiting fireman's neck is considered stand-offish, "undemocratic" ! As long as India refuses to be stampeded into the false trails of Western republicanism, as long as she preserves her own national ceremonials and formalities, she will hold aloft the torch of

an unboorish liberty—an example to those who believe that the truer the republican, the less polish he needs.

The first item was a classical dance, in classical costume, by two small girls representing Krishna and Radha. Their solemn and slow movements had obviously been carefully rehearsed, and from their concentrated expressions and darting eyes it was clear that they were occupied in an exercise which demanded all their attention. Turning young limbs into the classical positions takes time, and the careful finger, arm, and head, movements require a great effort of coordination. The natural stance of their youthful feet, as they thumped away rhythmically on the floor, set off the more artificial movements of the half-formed classical gestures. The slow clink, clink, of their anklets set with bells, and the fresh flowers round their childish faces contributed to a charming picture.

The curtain rose on the next item to reveal a bare stage with a sky-blue back-cloth. To a well-defined rhythm on drums and zithar, a girl entered backwards, swaying with little running steps this side and that, as pulling on an invisible string, she made believe that she was manoeuvring a kite sailing far out of sight above. The while she hauled and let out her invisible string, she sang a song with a repetitive chorus, which was a great success with those who (unlike me) understood Hindi.

Next came a comedy called 'April Fool' done by senior girls in modern clothes, about a husband and wife who have had a quarrel. To pay her husband out, the wife drinks from a bottle labelled poison given her by a sympathetic friend. She writes a farewell message to her husband and lies down to die. The husband finds the message, drinks from the bottle to end his despair, and himself prepares to die. But after a while both find themselves so persistently alive that they give death up as a bad job, rise, see each other, and rush thankfully into each other's arms. They examine the bottle of poison more carefully and find 'April Fool' written on it. Thus summarised, the story may sound macabre, but it was played with a nice sense of comedy and the acting of the scene in which the couple got ready to die was rich with comic mime and "business," and raised some of the evening's loudest laughs.

A village well was the centre of an operetta which followed. The village girls draw water and carry it away in *chatties* on their heads. They grind corn in a hand mill and are scolded

by their parents for not working hard enough. The village boys tease them as they idle to and fro, ogling the busy girls. The father of one of the girls tells her that she will not get any good offers of marriage if she does not work harder. In the end a bethrothal is celebrated between the idlest boy and the wittiest girl, who had always managed to find apt replies to his teasing.

The witty one was played by a girl with a delightfully gay personality, who enjoyed the footlights, and who sang all her songs with a smile streaked right across her face. She never hesitated and was never at a loss. The final act, in, which the girl is married and led off, walking with a certain coy demureness behind her husband, her head bowed in sign of modesty, her hand upon his shoulder betokening that she will follow him through life, while the father who had criticised her so much is loud in his sniffles, brought laughter and applause from the school.

A dramatic dance called "Life and Death" was presented in effective costumes. Some good classical instrumental music introduced the figure of Life—a girl of the classical period with a high-crowned head-dress. Decked with flowers, garlands, and jewels, she dances. Suddenly Death enters. She was a tall girl wearing a straight black robe that swept the floor; upon her head was a high cylindrical silver helmet. Her costume and movements produced a stark effect. Life tries to flee but cannot. She pleads with inexorable Death until she falls exhausted. Death catches her in her arms and bears her out. The episode was danced slowly and with great feeling. The sheer physical strength of the dancer of Death who was able to carry off her victim, without faltering, in dignified strides, was remarkable.

The *finale* and high-light of the show was a tableau specially prepared to introduce to Pilani the new Vidyapeeth sports-uniform—white cotton jodhpur trousers and shirt with royal blue scarf and ribbons. The curtain rose upon groups of girls posed in attitudes from the sports they represented. A fine stolid little girl, blue satin bows projecting at right angles on either side of her shining pigtails, stood in the centre of the stage holding her skipping rope in the act of skipping. The biggest girl in the school, an imposing figure of almost masculine beauty, stood behind her, holding aloft a volley ball while she gazed as though straining towards a net above her head. Another held a cricket bat at the beginning of a powerful drive. Another a baseball bat at

the end of a swipe. Dumb-bells, tennis and badminton racquets were held at characteristic angles, and a glossy new cycle was supported proudly by another be-bowed little girl. The whole made a refreshing picture of youth at the helm. The clean, sky-blue, back-cloth, imaginatively lit, gave a wonderful out-of-door finish, and the girls all looked so happy and bursting with suppressed energy that they evoked roars of applause.

INTERLUDE : THE SUTTEE

WHILE WE WERE watching the House party's final tableau, I became aware of a tall dishevelled man standing before Pandeji. He bent down to speak urgently. Pandeji rose as abruptly as is possible for one of his tranquil temperament, and went out with him. He returned after the House party was over and told us that a widow had announced her intention of committing suttee* the next day when her husband's body was to be cremated. The dishevelled man, a relative, had come for advice.

The origins of the rite of suttee are uncertain but as long ago as the fourth century B.C. the soldiers of Alexander the Great found it prevalent in Northern India. Suttee was never a universal practice, but, prior to its abolition by law in 1829, official records show between five and six hundred cases a year in the Bengal Presidency alone, and there were probably others that escaped official notice, so that it seems reasonable to suppose that in the whole of India there must have been several thousands a year. Although enlightened Indian opinion has condemned the practice and gave full support to its abolition, the tradition still commands great respect in the countryside, and as the custom was essentially one to glorify warriors and princes, it is not surprising that the memory of it is strong in Rajasthan—the country of warriors and princes.

In the eyes of the countryside, a woman who decides to immolate herself in the flames of her husband's funeral pyre is displaying the greatest proof of the most highly prized wifely virtue—fidelity—and becomes the object of a holy awe, such as, in the West, was once inspired by the sight, or the memory, of a martyr at the stake. But such feelings are outside the experience of the twentieth century Westerner, and the nearest comparison is perhaps the respect, veneration, and indeed honest envy, aroused by a soldier who, for his valour and fidelity, has been awarded his country's highest battle honour. On the other hand, in the eyes of the Indian Penal Code, anyone who forcibly burns a widow is guilty of murder, while he who aids a willing widow is guilty of abetment to suicide, punishable by imprisonment. From which it follows that when a widow announces her wish to

* *Sati* means faithful It is used of the woman, not of the rite For convenience, I use *sati* for the woman, and the anglicised "suttee" for the rite.

burn with her husband's body, the countryside is thrown into a state of conflict. Public sympathy is on the side of the *sati,* and those who feel it their duty to oppose the holy sacrifice know that they have undertaken a thankless task. But Pandeji is a natural leader and it can never have occurred to him to hesitate in telling the widow's relatives that it was their duty to dissuade her and, failing that, to prevent the suttee. Anyone aiding her would, he warned them solemnly, be prosecuted.

The girl's story was a simple one. Her husband had been one of G. D. Birla's *syces.** He had been thrown by his horse and had fractured his skull. We knew both horse and man, because the *syce* used to bring the horses, including the one that killed him, round to the Canal Koti for my children to ride. Dr. Awlegoenka operated at once but the *syce* died in the hospital without regaining consciousness. Rama and Sita had been married but a few months; Sita, a girl in her 'teens, was distracted by grief. And she belonged to the great caste of Rajput *thakurs,* that is, she was the daughter of generations of clansmen whose wives, in the great days gone by, had mounted their husbands' funeral pyres. She had heard stories of heroic *satis* since she could talk; the idea seemed part of nature to her.

As G. D. Birla occupies a position in Pilani comparable to that of the Lord of the Manor in an old English village, it was natural that the girl's relatives should send a telegram to him in Calcutta, where he happened to be, stating the facts and seeking his help. G. D. Birla wired back that if the girl was anxious for her future and dreaded to become a widow in an alien household, he would amply provide for her for the rest of her life. But Sita would not be comforted nor turn from her resolve to die.

Finally, the *thakurs* said :

"Very well, then. Go, prepare yourself for the fire. Put on your best *sari.* Anoint yourself with oil."

So Sita entered her room to prepare herself, and they locked her in that she might not escape.

More than one version of what happened next flashed into currency, but the depth of reverence inspired among the villagers by a *sati* is illustrated by the most widely believed story which was that God had manifested his divine will by making the locked door open of its own accord in sign that Sita was to be allowed to fulfil her vow.

In truth, the widow accompanied the body to the burning

* Grooms.

ghat, and before an enormous crowd of men, women, and children, all seized with religious ecstasy, she struggled to cast herself into the flames but was held back by her relatives. After the ceremony, the Inspector of Police ordered that she be taken into protective custody and cared for at police headquarters. He feared that the crowd, frustrated and outraged in its deepest feelings, might take matters into its own hands, or that the girl might try to commit suicide. It was in any case necessary to protect her from the hundreds who were swarming in on foot, and by camel and bus, from the villages for miles around to have her *darshan,* that is, to do reverence to her and to receive her blessing.

Later in the week, on the way back from somewhere, we were taken, much against my will, to visit Sita. Arrived in the jeep at police headquarters, I realised that everyone was standing waiting for me, so rather than create difficulties, and feeling that one more visitor could make no difference to the poor girl, I got out. The police sentry who escorted us was obviously labouring under deep emotion. His bearing was that of a man about to enter the holiest shrine. Tip-toeing in his heavy regulation boots, he led us past the married quarters, where we saw families engaged in the everyday task of preparing meals. Unconsciously, we followed the constable's example and tip-toed ourselves, although in the dust not a footfall could have been heard, and the clatter of dishes was loud and mundane enough. In a small bare thatched hut, we found the widow. Motionless as an image, she sat on the ground in a corner, leaning the back of her head against the mud wall. Her face was covered by her yellow *sari.* An old woman, who was crouching opposite her, turned and gazed at us curiously, but the widow never stirred.

CHAPTER X

THE ENGINEERING COLLEGE

PROFESSOR LAKSHMI NARAYANAN, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Rajputana, and Principal of the Birla Engineering College, is a genial companion but a strict disciplinarian. He is ambitious and determined; his openly avowed goal is to make the Birla Engineering College the finest engineering college in India, and, because he has limitless drive and a single-minded enthusiasm for his work, I am confident that he will achieve at least a great part of this ambition. But he is no mere hustling go-getter. His lively Madrassi intelligence and natural curiosity of mind save him from the narrow outlook characteristic of too many, otherwise first class, professional men.

"I deplore the traditional lack of general education prevalent among engineers," he said to me once. "They usually know nothing of business administration, labour relations, and industrial finance, although knowledge of such matters can make all the difference between the success or failure of an engineering project." He paused to fix me with the direct, intense, and unwavering gaze that I learnt to recognise as his way of underlining a point, then he went on with slow emphasis: "The engineer who is not equipped to take a broad view, who cannot see a local scheme in the national perspective, will always remain a subordinate and will never play his part in fashioning the policies of his firm, still less of his country."

Narayanan was the first person to direct my attention to the 2,113 pages of the *Report of the University Education Commission.* Narayanan reasonably urged that if I was to sée the work of the Birla Education Trust in the perspective of the problems of Indian education, I should have to study this monumental report. It was characteristic of his interest in his profession, and of his thoroughness, that Narayanan had got hold of this Report, of which some of the many educationists that I met in the course of writing this book had heard, through which some may indeed have glanced, but which no other happened to have read. It was also characteristic of Narayanan that he should spend his hard-earned leave in 1952 on a seven weeks' tour of Britain in order to visit engineering colleges and factories but that he should so have organised his route that he took in most of the univer-

sities and such varied spots as Grasmere, Edinburgh, and Loch Lomond, and timed himself to see Shakespearian performances at Oxford, Cambridge, and Stratford-on-Avon, and Edith Evans and Sybil Thorndike, in London. "I have been doing the country faster than the fastest American," he wrote gleefully to me. "I never had a spare minute and I used every minute to see and learn all I could . . . More than that, I have met many people and made many good friends." His letter shows him ready to share his enthusiasm and his appreciation. "It is all one continuous green and beautiful garden," he said and variations on the adjectives "beautiful", of places, and "charming", of people, flowed from his racing pen.

Nobody can accuse Narayanan of being an impractical professor; he was one of the engineers responsible for the design and execution of the Mettur dam—one of the largest structures of its kind in the world—and he was for many years an active engineer in the Government of India's Public Works Department.

Like all strong personalities Lakshmi Narayanan sets strong currents for and against himself in motion. You can be neutral about a nonentity; you cannot be neutral about a Narayanan. The type of boy who is naturally keen and ambitious thrives under his leadership. Boys have told me how lucky they feel to be working under a man of the highest ideals who is so obviously devoted to their interests. To those who do their duty, are up early, work hard, and live for the College, Lakshmi Narayanan shows a smiling charm that is a reward in itself. To such he is a benevolent despot whom there is no need to fear. But the impression that he makes on the would-be idler, on the man who does not put his studies and his college first, is the opposite.

THE ENGINEERING COLLEGE forms part of the main campus block of New Pilani, and Professor Narayanan's office is one of a group of principals' offices situated under the great 137 feet high clock tower. Unlike the principals' rooms in European institutions, there is hardly a trace of individuality about the "studies" of the Pilani college heads, and from what I saw of the five other universities that I visited in order to see Pilani against the background of Indian education as a whole, I would say that Indian principals regard their working quarters as offices rather than as studies; they rarely permit themselves the luxury of those personal possessions—pictures,

books, *bric-à-brac*—which betray tastes and interest. The echoing barrenness of the huge concrete and steel offices of the Pilani principals surprised me, who had been expecting the mellow intimacy of the Warden's study at New College, Oxford; they were just about as impressive as the offices of the clerks next door, except that Lakshmi Narayanan's desk was enormous, adorned with an outsized inkstand and blotter, and was littered with set squares, files, text books and correspondence. On the other hand, these offices are unlike those of Calcutta's business executives who usually work in small, dark, dirty rooms, overlooking littered courtyards full of other small, dark, dirty rooms. No, Pilani's offices are clean, spacious, and flood-lit by acres of windows; they look out upon green lawns and flower beds stretching away in immensity, as if, when they planned it all, Pandeji and G. D. Birla had seized the mechanical measuring tapes, ripped them out at a run as far as they would go in every direction, and then issued orders that every measured distance should be trebled.

On the day that I was to be shown round the Engineering College, I entered Professor Narayanan's office with some misgivings; I am no engineer and I feared that my questions would be so elementary that he would be both bored and baffled. But I need not have worried, Lakshmi Narayanan is never bored by anything connected with his profession and he communicates his enthusiasm.

We went first to the Strength of Materials testing hall. Here machines, huge and small, test every type of material with which an engineer must deal. A thick steel bar was torn apart while the students watched the needle register the number of tons pull required. A wonderful small machine broke and registered minutely other metals. The pressure that different qualities of concrete will stand was also being tested.

The engineering chemistry laboratory was not in use at the moment, but my eye was caught by a diagram on the black-board illustrating how to judge the amount of carbon in steel by the different types of sparks emitted under drilling.

The hydraulics laboratory contained enormous structures demonstrating water-flow in channels and pipes, and the many uses of pumps and turbines. A water ram was in operation, worked by the students. The behaviour of silt is studied exhaustively, a matter of practical importance to

students who live in the country with the greatest artificially irrigated area in the world. In undivided India, the irrigation system in the smallest province, Sind, covered an area greater than that of all the irrigation in Egypt. Americans assume as a matter of course that the United States possess the world's biggest system of artificial irrigation, but this was not even true before World War II when America's system covered 19,000,000 acres to India's 48,000,000, and since the war, of course, huge dams, some already completed, others still under construction, have shot India's pre-war figures to pieces.

We saw a machine for studying the behaviour of water streamline and flow. It looks like a large glass-sided box. You fill it with water, then insert a handful of dye, and manipulate a variety of controls to produce all the various motions to which water is subject in different conditions. The vibrations, or currents, set up can be followed as the dye spreads gradually in either the required jerks or streams. Types of this machine are found in all well-equipped engineering colleges, but the Pilani model contains unique novelties and modifications invented and designed by Professor Narayanan. This fascinating machine turned my family into enthusiastic observers of water behaviour. We began to notice things that we had never seen before in the irrigation ditches around the countryside: for example, the mark on the water's surface made by the V-shaped wedge cut out of the brass slot-dam inserted in the concrete channels to limit the flow. At first we thought that a long horse hair was trailing on the water in a V-shape; but Armyn soon spotted that this was the surface mark in response to the V-shaped wedge under water.

The steam engine hall resembles the engine room of several small ships put together, and in the outside portion the furnace was being prepared to heat the boiler for the afternoon demonstration. There is a small factory chimney for the study of smoke disposal.

Aero-engines and all kinds of other internal combustion engines cover the floor of the next hall. A Rolls Royce engine was amongst them. A complete small plane stood in a corner.

"You must remember," said Lakshmi Narayanan, as we walked down rows of little machines in the electrical engineering hall, "that in 1946, here, where you stand, was still jungle. In that year the college opened in an assortment

of temporary buildings, many with thatched roofs, in which we worked for four years. It was in 1948 that Pandeji laid the foundation-stone of this block." I recalled the factory chimney, the boiler and the furnaces, down by Lakshmi Narayanan's residence, where students still do metal casting from time to time. "What is more," he continued, "because Indian engineering firms naturally concentrate on commercial types and because the national capital works programme had priority for imported machinery, many essential instruments and items of equipment were not available for love or money, so that we had to design, make, and assemble them, piece by piece, here ourselves with our own hands . . . " He pointed to a machine. "That, for example, had to be built from the bottom up, as we procured the parts or made them. I don't think any other college has a machine just like it. We designed it for the special purpose of instructing students in electrical engineering. We are particularly proud of our electrical engineering section as a whole."

A vast hall full of busy students in the middle of a demonstration proved to be the high tension laboratory. Lakshmi Narayanan, the perfectionist, admitted to equipment still lacking, but I could see only that everyone was well employed with a variety of apparatus. Half the floor of this hall is sunk 8 feet below the main level and in this pit is a large scale-model, about 50 by 25 feet, of a hydro-electric plant with pylons distribution system. This plant, obviously the result of fine equipment and skilled engineers, had also been built by the students. An exhibition of electrical instruments in component parts interested me: the instruments were laid out and displayed in glass cases as in a museum; power was connected with each part and could be controlled by a knob at the side; a twist and the student set in motion gadgets such as the house energy meter, the recording volt meter, the ammeter and frequency meter. Each part rotates and connects with the others, showing the general construction and the special function of each. The radio engineering hall was full of charts and instruments.

Passing a lecture room and a laboratory, full of absorbed students, we found ourselves back in Professor Narayanan's study.

All that I have described so far occupied the ground floor of the East wing of the main block. We had walked the whole way round the inner quadrangle which was a geometrical pattern of smooth lawns and blossoming cold weather flower beds. Inside, the halls were cool and

spacious; outside, the brilliant sun shone blindingly on the pure white buildings, so new and so recently white-washed. A scaffold still leant against the clock tower, and the massive shape of the theatre-lecture hall (able to hold all Pilani's 2,000 students) was rearing itself above the roof-tops in an entanglement of bamboo scaffolding. Certainly Lakshmi Narayanan was right to have insisted that the depth of the Engineering College should be only one hall plus the verandah built round the inner quadrangle; light and air entered freely from windows at either side of the halls.

"In any case, I don't want the college to be bigger than it is," Professor Narayanan said. "We have 450 boys and 50 teachers. If we took in more we should become unwieldy. Individual attention would go. Standards would fall. This college has *got* to have the highest standards in India."

We walked round the drawing halls and lecture rooms on the upper floor, and watched a class of students bending over their boards, intent on designing internal combustion engines. The fine accurate work and the beautifully drawn geometrical figures were a pleasure to see.

"What do you think about the old quarrel between scientists and engineers?" I asked, drawing a bow at a venture. The question was a lucky one and aroused the enthusiasm that is always awaiting the chance to burst from Professor Narayanan.

"Engineering and Science—particularly Physics—are closely allied; their progress is inter-dependent. It is therefore essential that scientists and engineers should have close contact and be aware of each other's work—particularly on the academic side. There is a needless and unreal argument in favour of pure science. Engineering and technology are different facets of the gem of knowledge and truth. Pure science has the value of the purity of an uncut diamond. Applied Science and Engineering bring out the lustre, the scintillating brilliance, of the cut and polished diamond. The pure scientist can forget himself in the enjoyment of the truth that diamond and charcoal are the same as carbon. I prefer to enjoy the light of radiation from the facets of the cut diamond... Today the urgent need is for the engineering-scientist or the scientist engineer. In the fields of electronics, atomic energy or solar energy, for example, science and engineering lose their separate identities. I say all this only to emphasize the need for keeping the closest association between engineers and scientists. And that's why

I keep inviting eminent scientists here, and seeking their light and guidance. I want to train not only engineers but engineer-scientists in this engineering college. The Birla Education Trust has offered a substantial sum to establish a National Electronic Laboratory* at Pilani, and when that scheme materialises, it will help us still further to mix up engineers and scientists."

"How do you set about inspiring your students with your desire to make this the finest college in India?" I asked next.

"Well, the demand for engineering is such that every year we already have five times more applications, coming from all over India, than we have vacancies. I can therefore afford to pick and choose, and I tell each new arrival how fortunate he is. I point out that it is up to him to make me want to keep him. I weed them out after the first term or two. Anyone who does not put his back into his work, or who shows himself unworthy of the trust we place in him, just goes."

I wondered whether this was a fresh angle on the respect and awe which surrounds this slow-walking, deceptively casual figure.

"Then you don't look at your students from an exclusively scholastic point of view?"

"It is *because* I expect engineers to be leaders and organisers that, in all my dealings with them, I take into account their character and behaviour as much as their work."

"What happens when you have a brilliant student who may be a bit of a scamp? Clever, original people are apt to be rebels—to kick over the traces in their youth. Independent minds often have to gather their experience in their own way and won't take it from other people at second hand."

"I do my best to persuade good students to follow the path which I know to be the most useful and constructive for them They must educate themselves as leaders. One day, they may be in charge of a great scheme like the Damodar Valley dam. Do you think a man with such responsibilities, with such problems, with all that material, all those thousands of coolies in his hands, can afford to be sloppy, or lazy, or unpunctual? No. I only want boys of the highest calibre, who share my ideals of what an engineer should be."

"Then you mark them on character in their finals?" I queried.

"I keep 200 marks in my hands which I award at the end

* The laboratory was set up in 1953

of every three years on an assessment of general fitness for the profession. For small disciplinary breaches I fine students. But they all know that everything they do is totalled up at the end under my four headings: (1) Physical fitness (2) Attendance, punctuality, regularity, earnestness; (3) Conduct, character; (4) Personality, leadership, organisation. Each boy is judged by a committee of the teachers who are in contact with him. A chart is kept and marked every term throughout the year and confirmed at our discretion after an interview with the boy at each year's end. His personality counts for a lot and I have the final word in the award of the marks."

"Yes," I said. "I've already heard of the famous interview from the students. Many are the tales told!"

Lakshmi Narayanan chuckled. The gleam in his eye had a "Keep them guessing!" suggestion in it.

"And yet," he went on seriously. "They need not be afraid. Why should they imagine I would want to fail them when the reputation of my College is at stake? No. They are good boys on the whole, and I like them. But I stand no nonsense... Actually, I regard our interviews as part of the equipment which we give our boys—a knowledge of how to handle themselves, how to speak and behave, in an interview. I teach them myself, especially the shy students who may lack confidence and need a little help. We teach them to speak up frankly but politely. And *does* it bear fruit? Look at the results." He reached for a file. "Here's the official letter that I received yesterday saying that five Pilani boys from the last batch that went up for interview had all obtained commissions in the Indian Army Technical Branch which includes candidates for the Air Force engineers. That leaves only 20 boys to get jobs from the last batch of 81, and that within four months of their leaving. There was 100 percent employment of the 1950 batch of 65 boys within six months of leaving—and all after competitive interviews with other students from every part of India. We have old boys in the Air Force, the Army, and Government electrical departments; and any number of big firms like the Textile Machinery Corporation, National Bearing Company, Hindusthan Motors, Martin Burn, Jessop & Company, the Orient Paper Mills, and so on. We specialise in teaching our students industrial psychology, which will be useful for those who have to deal with labour and management, in factories, mines, and in the army, etc.

"I follow my old boys' careers with interest. I hear from them and about them. Although we drive them hard—ours is a four-year course condensed into three years—they are grateful to us. They find that we have equipped them well. And here is my final reward that makes the whole thing worth while—" he picked up a file—"letters from old boys out in the world who love the College well enough to want to keep in touch."

A U N O. SESSION AT THE ENGINEERING COLLEGE

EVERY hour of the Engineering College boys' day is filled, either by practical work in the lectures and laboratories at stated hours, or by physical training and organised games at others. Most of their (so called) leisure is occupied by the reading required for the theoretical part of their studies. It is not surprising therefore that the Engineering boys profess a slight inferiority complex about the standard of their entertainments, since by comparison with the other schools and colleges they have no spare time to think out and prepare them, but, judging by the two entertainments that I attended, I am inclined to think that these professions are a form of fishing for compliments.

Take the mock session of the U.N.O. Security Council's discussion on the Anglo-Iranian oil conflict that the college put on. The object of the show was to give an impression, miniature but concrete, of a Security Council debate. It was held in the temporary entertainment hall that is being used until the main block's new theatre* is completed. A special trip all the way to Delhi to visit the local U.N.E.S.C.O. branch had been made in order to obtain the national flags and information charts and posters which decorated the hall and its approaches. The stage was occupied by students representing the delegates of ten nations, each seated at a desk with his country's flag, under the presidency of Professor N. Keshvamurthy. A realistic atmosphere was suggested by a battery of cameramen with flashlights who clustered round each "celebrity" as he came in, by a running commentary broadcast in an alleged American accent over the loudspeakers before the session opened, and by a press gallery of scribbling news hounds. We, the audience, occupied the main body of the hall and represented the public.

B. R. Parti, star not only of the Engineering College but

* See page 232.

of the Pilani debating world, surpassed himself as actor as well as orator in the role of Dr. Mossadiq, the Iranian Premier. With his face powdered to a sickly pallor, he hobbled in, supporting himself with a stick and leaning heavily on his solicitous secretary's shoulder. Newspapermen jumped up to interview him; photographers snapped him from all angles.

As soon as the formal proceedings opened, stenotypists, grouped beneath the dais, kept up a brisk rat-tat on typewriters (but Aminta, curious and unafraid as usual, stalked up to see what they were typing and found that their efforts were essentially histrionic, as were the "notes" taken in the press gallery).

The spectacle to which we were treated was a carefully planned work of imagination—not a literal reproduction but a dramatic distillation; episodes that had filled several days at Lake Success were telescoped into an hour and a half. All the "delegates" spoke with a fervour and conviction which suggested that, if dams and power houses cease to be built, these young engineers could all take to the stage in after life. Their style was consistently rhetorical, reminiscent of the dramatic and emotional way in which one imagines Edmund Burke to have spoken. They soared into the heights, lashed their opponents into furies of indignation, leaped to their feet in lively protests, personal exchanges, and interruptions, which caused the President to use his hammer frequently and loudly. Whether Sir Gladwyn Jebb was as vehement and as rapier-like as R. Chona, his Pilani shade, whether he provoked such interruptions or himself interrupted as often, I do not know, but I am sure that he would have been impressed by Chona's presentation of the British brief.

Here are some points made in the course of the debate; if not all were made at Lake Success, it will perhaps be nevertheless agreed that they were good entertainment :—

Speaking as Dr. Mossadiq, B. R. Parti cried :

"The eyes of millions are focussed on you—and they are eager to know whether there exists anything like social justice, anything like honesty, anything like the universal declaration of human rights. This is a moment of trial and tribulation for the United Nations. To be or not to be is the question. All the nations look to you with infinite suspense. If you fail them today, believe me, your Excellencies, it will be the beginning of the end. The gigantic superstructure of the United Nations will collapse like a house of cards. Your

failure will mean not only the end of Iran, but the end of the United Nations, the end of this world—the end of humanity. If such a precarious situation is to be averted, render unto Caesar that which is his."

"At this point," says the official record, "Dr. Mossadiq was overcome by emotion and bad health, and collapsed in his chair." While 'doctors' rushed to the ailing Premier's aid, his secretary read the rest of his speech which concluded with this peroration :

"England's insistence to keep this case before the Council tantamounts to fighting the battles of truth with the weapons of error. The British attitude prevents the effulgence of a glorious dawn in the Iranian skies. I want this Council to make a note of the shadow of acute discontent that looms large on the Iranian horizon. I beseech this mighty Council to read the ominous signs of ruin and disaster writ large on the blank walls of the future, failing which not only Iran but this great body itself is destined to be swept off by the flood of time to the ocean of destruction."

In quoting Sir Gladwyn Jebb, I skip those parts of his speech which deal with the facts of the case in favour of a couple of passages which strike me as otherwise interesting. With what seemed reasonable apprehensions, Sir Gladwyn began thus :

"At so late an hour of the evening, I am sure you will do me the justice to believe that I do not want to go into deep discussion of this great question. Exhausted as the attention of the Council must be and unaccustomed as I am myself to late sittings, nothing but a deep sense of my duty would have induced me to trouble you at all."

Sir Gladwyn went on to refute the Iranian accusation that the presence of British warships in the Persian Gulf constituted an armed invasion and asserted that this was an "impartial neutralizing action, addressed as sternly to the Iranian Government as for the safety of British lives which are so dear to the British Crown. That it was an armed invasion is a white lie, a fantastic and barbaric expression, an unreality which lives in the shades of modesty and truth and states nothing as it is and everything as it is not."

And here is the highlight of Chiranjit Singh's speech as Mr. Maisky, the Soviet delegate:

"For five long years, session after session, we have lashed round and round this miserable circle of occasional arguments and temporary expedients. Our heads turn and our

stomachs nauseate with them. We have had them in every shape, we have looked at them from every angle—but peace is still a mirage... The rattle and thunder of speeches in support of the British resolution is merely a futile effort to camouflage a flagrant breach of the charter and of the fundamental principles of the U.N.O., and as such it is illegal... By exercising pressure and terror on Iran, the Anglo-Americans want Iran to carry out their policy against her better judgment and against the fair advantage of Iranian nationals. In fact, I will not hesitate to surmise from the complexions of this debate that they want to challenge the United Nations into a subservient power playing up to their tune, and thus call upon other nations to contribute blood to fatten their swelling bellies."

GAMES AND ENTERTAINMENTS

THE Engineering students live in hostels which are in charge of masters known as wardens. The wardens live with their students. They appoint the hostel prefects in the ratio of one prefect to every twentyfour students. The prefects are responsible for normal discipline, roll call, maintenance of the common rooms, and lights out; they deal with complaints in the first instance, and pass on to the warden anything serious enough to merit his intervention.

The Engineering Hostel Union and the Engineering Association are the two chief organisations run by the students themselves. All students automatically belong to the Hostel Union, which is responsible for thinking up and organising all recreational activities; different committees of the Union run the mock parliaments, entertainments, debates, games and athletics, the Literary Circle, college magazine, and the fortnightly news bulletin. The president of the Union, is appointed by the college authorities, but the vice-president and the secretary are elected by the students and hold office for a year. One of the professors is in charge of the Hostel Union in the capacity of adviser.

The Engineering Association, whose president is a professor, has a vice-president and secretary elected from among the students. The office bearers of the Hostel Union are generally elected for their personality or popularity, while those of the Engineering Association are usually chosen for their intellectual attainments since the object of the Association is to organise lectures and discussions on technical subjects. The Association has a visual education section which

organises weekly programmes of instructional films, which the students show themselves, operating the college projector. The subjects of the excellent films that I saw, most of which were lent by the British or United States Information Services, included the design of aircraft; the construction of different types of springs for cars and lorries; electro-physics; nuclear physics; and a life of Thomas Edison. These shows are held once a week throughout the year and, in addition to documentaries, feature films such as *Joan of Arc, The Good Earth,* and *Mrs. Miniver,* are included.

While I was in Pilani, a great exhibition of engineering, science, and arts, was organised by the Engineering Association, which, besides calling on the resources of its own college, secured contributions from the Vidyapeeth, Montessori High School, and Birla College. The Physics, Botany, Zoology, and Pharmaceutical Departments of the Birla College provided many exhibits and numerous scientific instruments, manned and demonstrated by students.

The Engineering students worked in shifts to demonstrate their machines and the many gadgets that had been specially contrived for the occasion. For example, the entrance to the electrical engineering hall was brightly lit by bulbs controlled by a rotating switch, as were the purple arrows directing visitors up and down corridors between the exhibits, while the names of the sections were illuminated by fluorescent lighting. I was struck by the Engineering College crest depicted in coloured lights, which flashed on and off turning over the pages of the book which forms part of the crest.

Here are a few of the exhibits that I happen to remember best :—

Under Civil Engineering came a design for a modern building; how to dig a deep tube well; how to obtain timber and how to use it; hot water supply; and a site for a storage reservoir. Under Hydraulics, were the Kaplani turbine, the six stage centrifugal pump, and the three throw ram pump, all working in conjunction with the other machines. In the steam room, engines were being demonstrated. Elsewhere, internal combustion engines were in action as I passed through with the crowd.

One group of students had invented a device by which a boat sailing up a river could raise a bridge by radar as it approached.

Of the many exhibits in the electrical engineering hall, those that seemed to attract most interest from lay visitors

were working models of an office lift, a tram, and a toy railway complete in all details; *It Might Come To You As A Shock,* a demonstration of methods of avoiding danger; and *Bring 'Em Back Alive,* a demonstration of first aid for electric shock.

The students were delighted to demonstrate their various models, and their explanations for the benefit of the lay ignoramus were further demonstrations of politeness and good manners.

The Engineering Athletic Club has a president, a general captain, and a captain for every game. The daily playing of games is compulsory. The main successes in 1951 were the winning of (1) the Bhatia Memorial Olympic Basket Ball Shield for the third year in succession, (2) the Bharatpur cup for the Rajputana inter-college Basket Ball Championship, and (3) the Rajputana inter-college Hockey Championship. The Engineering College basket ball team was chosen to represent Rajputana in the Olympic tournament in Bombay, and won the Olympic Championship.

One day, I watched the Engineering College pair in the Pilani Badminton tournament in which they won both the singles and doubles championships, while the ladies' event went to an Engineering professor's wife. The finals of the doubles were fought to a gruelling finish before a cheering, groaning, yelling crowd, and the remarkable standard of play justified their frenzy. The boys smashed so hard and fast that one frequently could barely follow the track of the shuttlecock; indeed the speed of the game was an eye-opener to my innocent self who had hitherto associated Badminton with a gentle pitter-patter of long-skirted ladies on some vicarage lawn. These boys flashed from side to side in rallies that I should guess to have frequently lasted three or more minutes. The length and strenuousness of the play, which dispelled for ever my idea of Badminton as a sissy game, was a physical test for all the players. The extreme youth of the Birla College pair, one of whom looked about twelve although I was told that he was in fact sixteen, aroused the crowd's sympathy, but brilliantly as they dropped and smashed, leaped, twisted, retrieved, and attacked again, they could not match the stronger and more solid engineers. The final stroke let loose a storm of cheers and groans; there were hand-wringings and back-thumpings; the engineers triumphantly carried their pair off on their shoulders, while for a moment the younger Birla College boy was blinded by a sudden burst of tears.

95 Electrical Engineering

96 Principal Narayanan giving a class



97. A workshop

98. An aero engine



99 Radio engineering

100 A class discussion



101. A vast spectacle Dining room terrace overlooking playing fields out of sight below See page 254



102 Vidyamandir boys at work—an unposed snap. "These views must be something to your boys" See page 254



103 Dr Otto Wolff and Mr Pande



104 Hobbies at Naini Tal

105. The Arts class . pictures in oils, pastels, water colours and tempera. See page 278



106. The tuckshop "Hurry up there!"



107 Matron supervising juniors' lunch

108. Future leaders of India. See page 283



109. The youngest boy in the school

brethren simply had no alternative. I found him good company. He was ready to talk about himself and what he said was usually as unexpected as his antecedents and appearance.

As soon as we sat down, dinner was served on the all-in-one aluminium trays which take the whole meal at once, and which are a perfect solution of the problem of broken crockery that besets all institutions called upon to feed large numbers. While from huge baskets the college waiters distributed piles of hot *puris* (unleavened bread pancakes—scrumptious with *ghee*!) to the students, the members of the Hostels Union Entertainments Committee, who were in charge of the rejoicings, saw that all ran smoothly, and themselves looked after the guests of honour: more *puris* for Pandeji; another helping of some delicious curries for the children and me.

Hitherto, I had always enjoyed fireworks in the open air, and nothing in my experience had prepared me for the cacophony of reverberating explosions, metallic music, and shouts of laughter and talk, that filled that echoing concrete-walled hall, packed to bursting with perspiring and happy boys. Let the air in tame European banquets grow thick with mere cigarette smoke—ours that night was dimmed with drifts of gunpowder and under the stark violet lights huge shadows were flung greenly hither and thither. Several sparrows and a pigeon or two swooped about the place from time to time. Only Indian birds can behave with such indifference to the unaccountable ways of human beings. Incommoded by the noise and smoke no doubt they were, but they had no intention of being driven from their haunts in the rafters. The braver type of European birds would have been dashing themselves to death against the window panes, while the timid would, without further ado, just have died from terror.

A feeling of elation tingled up my spine, as obviously up five hundred other spines. We all ate, and we all laughed, and we all shouted.

Swami Agehananda leant down from his towering six foot nine inches to boom unexpectedly in my ear:

"Just the right noise to welcome Mr. Churchill back!"

I realised that this was an allusion to the recent Conservative election victory and return to office in Britain, but I suppose that my face must have betrayed my surprise at a learned *sunyassin's* interest in such mundane and far-off matters, for he hastened to add in an explanatory bellow:

"I'm completely anti-British for their treatment of India

in the past, but I'm a hundred per cent bred-in-the-bone Tory about everything else."

"*Oh?*" was all that on the spur of the moment I could think of screaming back.

"Yes. It's the only thing I have in common with my father: we're both Tories."

I considered and discarded various possible replies, but the noise was not conducive either to logic, or to wit, or even to further investigation of fact, so I said nothing.

Some minutes later I noticed the Swami (that unorthodox ascetic) beckoning a waiter to bring him another helping of a rich, curried cauliflower. He caught my eye and leaning towards me like the tower of Pisa shouted :

"My favourite dish."

"*Oh?*" I screamed up trying to make it sound as intelligent as possible.

After a pause for consolidation on both sides following this conversational foray, I saw him gathering himself for a further effort. He bent down. I strained up. A couple of thunder flashes went off as he spoke and what he said sounded ridiculously like : "I've just had jaundice".

"What did you say?" I shouted.

He repeated his remark and I heard it clearly: "I've just had jaundice."

This time my brain responded at once and I yelled back: "You'll have a relapse after all this." (And he did!).

Speeches were attempted, but as soon as *Bahin aur Bahia* had left the lips of the speaker, appalling crashes broke out, and he sat down amidst roars of laughter. Mr. Nebnani, President of the Hostels Union, and Mr. O. D. Dhamija, Secretary, each tried to propose a vote of thanks, but each in turn gave up as salvoes burst over them.

So we all went home, ears ringing, drunk with noise, smoke and laughter. I shall not easily forget the rows of happy dark faces, the violet light, the green drifting smoke, the echoes of Hindi song, the big bangs, the delicious curries, and, upon Jawaharlal Nehru's altar, the wilting white garlands, looking innocent and withdrawn like babes in their cradles, asleep.

The next day, I attended the lecture that the Swami gave on the Categorical Imperative to the Engineering boys. I need not give any *resumé* of his remarks as I am sure that everybody is as familiar as I am with this recondite byway of ethics; suffice to say that the Swami rendered the subject understandable to his lay audience who were having their

outlook enlarged under the Medusan eye of their Principal who was in the chair.

There were many questions at the end of the lecture, but the only one that I remember was put by a young man who asked if atonement was necessary to free the soul from the effects of sin. I hope that he was comforted by the Swami's reply, for the poor boy looked as though he were acquainted with sorrow.

Later, when I met the Swami again, we talked about his lecture, and I ventured the opinion that when Kant had elaborated his doctrine that right conduct lies in obedience to a rule that is universally applicable to all particular cases, he had not envisaged some of the posers that mothers have to face.

"What posers?" the Swami asked, bringing all his intellectual guns to bear upon me.

"During the winter of 1947, my three children and I spent the Christmas holidays in a leaking cottage on the Scottish moors. One morning, I came downstairs to find that snow a foot deep had been forced in by the blizzard through the crack down the side of the kitchen door. Although it was eight o'clock, it was still pitch black outside and the snow was swirling round a drift already eight feet high against the cottage wall. I lit the fire, started the porridge, laid the breakfast table, and got the children up. Flavian, the eldest boy, was making the toast and boiling the milk. I was stirring the porridge and making the coffee. All at once, in the same time that it takes to count ten, the following happened: Aminta, then aged four, began turning somersaults on the floor, shouting "Look, Mummy! Look!" Flavian asked if the Himalayas were thrown up by volcanoes or earthquakes. Armyn wanted to know why Christ was crucified. The toast burned; the milk boiled over; and the front door bell rang. ... What universally applicable rule would ensure right action in that situation?"

"That's easy," the Swami said. "When otherwise occupied, do not answer the door."

"Bother!" I said. "That was the first thing I did."

CHAPTER XI

THE VIDYAMANDIR, NAINI TAL

THE ABRUPT STEEPNESS of the Himalayan foot-hills amazes me afresh each time. At a distance, the sharp outlines look like the bristly backs of wild boar, but, as you approach, the bristles turn into large trees. From the plains, you would never guess that half a continent of the world's highest ranges lie beyond, but once you have begun to climb, the stubbly hill-sides open up to reveal breath-taking vistas and views of ramparts, peaks, valleys, torrents—pleasure gardens laid out by the Gods to enjoy as they look down from their abode among the eternal snows on the roof of the world.

Scored out of the hill-side itself, the road runs between thousands upon thousands of trees mounting ever higher to one side, while the *khud* falls away to greater and greater depths on the other, and because it twists and turns upon itself at dizzying angles, the high and low sides keep changing places, looming and yawning, now to your right, now to your left, giving glimpses of swathes of drifting wood-smoke, the dramatic scarlet of poinsettias against the gnarled red-brown trunks of great tree-sized rhododendrons, the flight of green parrots across the black precipices and indigo shadows of a gorge... The air is redolent with the fresh pungency of pine and deodar... Here and there you meet sturdy hill folk; and if you stop, you hear amidst the silence the tonk-tonk of mule bells.

At 7, 877 feet, the Birla Vidyamandir is the highest school in India.

As any institution situated in the Himalayas must be, the Vidyamandir is an assortment of buildings set up without apparent plan in relationships which are dictated by the contours of the mountains. Some houses rest securely on plateaux; some have excavated holes for themselves out of the hill-side; others cling precariously to ledges. They are reached and linked together by paths winding drunkenly round about, up and down, from one level to another. In the Vidyamandir, the main paths are covered by arcades of corrugated iron on posts to enable boys and staff to pursue their avocations without being soaked during the monsoon. The newcomer to an Indian hill station is repelled by the corrugated iron roofs, mostly painted pink—eyesores amidst scenery in which the spectacular is the normal; the reason is,

however, that every item of building material and equipment has to be brought over a score of ranges, each higher than the other, mostly by hand, and secondly, that in an area liable to earthquakes, corrugated iron falls more gratefully on the head than tiles or timber.

The school consists of eighteen buildings of varying sizes at various levels on the shoulder of a mountain facing south and south-east. The highest is the hospital—a long cottage. Slightly below, at a different angle, are four more cottages containing fine quarters for masters and their families; the windows look through the top branches of trees which reach up from the steep descent: you have the feeling that if you jumped out of the window, you would never stop falling.

Leaning back to prevent yourself from breaking into a dangerous run, that might easily prove your last, down the narrow, zig-zagging path between the whispering deodars, you soon find yourself looking upon the roof of a large rectangular house, stone-built and substantial—the senior dormitory. From the artificially levelled terrace, built out from the hill-side upon which the dormitory stands, I saw over my left shoulder a far distant snow peak peeping at an unearthly angle over tree-clad hill-tops. Then, turning my head slowly to the right, I scanned high ranges descending into the foothills—russet promontories terraced by villagers; or ridges green with oak and pine; some slopes drenched in sunlight, others overcast by cloud shadow-continents. Afar, a few dark blotches of woodland and a shining serpentine river stretched southward out of the picture where the plains smudged with the horizon in a golden haze. Over my right shoulder, the tufted ranges again soared abruptly from the invisible depths in which the lake of Naini Tal lay hidden, up to the top of the mountain where Government House rests.

As I stood trying to take in this vast spectacle, noises of shouting and of mule bells drifted up from near and far. On a terrace below the school, a black and white bull, tethered under the oaks, was grazing. A coolie in a ragged jacket and jodhpurs, bent double under oak logs slung across his back from a leather strap circling his forehead, plodded up the sun-flecked path, aiding himself with a stout stick; behind him came his little son, identically clad, bent, burdened, and aided: a reminder of the strength of these hill people. What a change from the slender limbs, the fluttering muslins, the lissom bamboos of Bengal. A soot-faced grey ape, her baby

clinging beneath her, scampered across a glade; her chattering husband leaped down after her from a tree-top on to a lower branch, plunging it with a swish almost to the ground for a comfortable chair-borne landing.

Through the shadowed tree trunks below I now discerned the two storeyed house which contains the Principal's quarters and the junior dormitories. The narrow terrace just manages to spread out sideways a playground the size of a couple of tennis courts before it ends above a drop, down which paths wind towards Naini Tal. The largest building is the classroom and laboratory block, on a rounded terrace big enough to take a hockey ground. Above the block are the offices of the Principal and the bursar, and the kitchen and dining room; directly below the block are other terraces with playing fields.

How lucky the 300 boys of the Vidyamandir are, I reflected, thinking of the shut-in schools of dirty, slum-ridden Calcutta, and of a dozen other overcrowded cities. Where the widest view is across a dusty compound enclosed by high walls, where the nose is assailed by garlic and garbage, where the ear is smitten by the explosions of internal combustion engines, what is there to feed a boy's imagination? In the Vidyamandir, you may go to the window to glance out, but you remain to gaze. In Calcutta, you do not go to the window, unless the noise of screaming brakes sends you rushing in hopes of accidental entertainment.

But such confused feelings are difficult to put into words, and all that I said to Dr. Otto Wolff, the Vidyamandir Principal, was : "It must do something to your boys—this magnificent view."

And he said: "It must. It certainly does to me." Pointing to the corner of a lake, just visible a couple of thousand feet below us, he added: "That's Bimthal lake, where the boys went for a swimming competition yesterday. We can't use Naini Tal lake because it has cold springs and streams, dangerous at this time of the year." (It was in November, 1952, that I visited the Vidyamandir).

"And do you take the boys out for treks into the hills sometimes?" I asked, remembering Simla days, picnics at Mashobra, and expeditions away beyond, towards Tibet.

"So far, about a hundred of them have gone twice a year, for a week or so. They use the *dak* bungalows and take tents and food along—no road-houses in the hills, you know. They don't happen to have had a trek since I've been here—

my wife and I only took over three months ago—but they have planned one to the Pindari glacier for next year."

WHY AND HOW THE VIDYAMANDIR WAS FOUNDED

THE TRUST owes its acquisition of the Vidyamandir to Pandeji's interest and initiative.

Although the Mughal emperors built themselves palaces and gardens here and there in the hills, it was the British who first built hill stations and inaugurated the practice of maintaining Government servants, and relays of troops, in the full vigour of their health by regular seasons in the hills during the hot weather. As time went on, European schools were opened in the Himalayas. As a hillman himself, Pandeji has from his childhood been conscious of the beauties and the invigorating climate of the mountains. He always felt the absence of a good residential school in the hills where Indian boys could grow up in an Indian environment, educated in Indian traditions and culture. The European hill schools were, he thought, too denationalising in their influence on Indian boys and girls.

"Indians have failed to take advantage of this bracing climate," he complains. "Even today the independent federal and state Governments show no special interest in situating schools in the hills to enable as many as possible of our boys and girls to grow up as healthy and robust as possible."

Pandeji spoke thus to G. D. Birla and secured his approval to investigate the possibilities. The several buildings and the 55 acre estate of the American Mission's Philander Smith College were up for sale in 1946. The premises had been used by the Hallet school for British boys who had been sent out of England during the war. When peace came, parents naturally returned their boys to schools in England. Pandeji approached the American Mission, but they demanded a price that he thought exorbitant. The Philander Smith buildings were then handed over to refugees from Burma, and other places, who did much damage. After their departure, the vacant premises were looted of furniture, laboratory equipment, water pipes—everything that could be removed. When the Mission saw their property deteriorating on their hands, they agreed to Pandeji's bid.

There then began what (reading between the lines of Pandeji's reply to my enquiries) seems best described as one of the biggest hustles in educational history. Possession of the

work of all-India interest carried out by the Society, and some of the books that it has published :

Beli Krishna Rukamini Ri (the "glory-spreading" story of Krishna and Rukmini) in Dingal, edited by Pandit S. K. Pareek and Professor N. D. Swami, both of the Birla College, and by Thakur Ram Singh.

Dhole Maru Ra Duha (The ballad of Dhola and Maru, famous lovers of Rajput legend), edited by Pandit N. D. Swami and Thakur Ram Singh.

Rajasthan Batan (Lays of Rajasthan), prose interspersed with couplets, by Pandit S. K. Pareek.

Bolavana, an original drama by Pandit S. K. Pareek. Staged under the name of "Escort" by the Pilani Students in 1935.

Rajasthan ke Lokgit (Folk songs of Rajasthan). Two volumes by Pandit S. K. Pareek, Professor N. D. Swami, and Thakur Ram Singh. Some of the songs were collected and their notation prepared by Miss Khare.

Rajasthan ke Lokgit, a small volume with a critical appreciation by Pandit N. D. Swami.

Rajasthan Ra Duha, edited by Pandit N. D. Swami. A *duha* is a couplet, expressing sentiments about such matters as the separation of lovers, historical incidents, the seasons, heroism, love, often epigrammatic in expression. In 1935, this book won the Manasingh Puraskar prize of Rs. 500/- for the best Rajasthani book of the year.

Chauboli (Spoken story), a collection of four Rajasthani stories, edited and translated into Hindi by Professor K. L. Sahal and Professor P. R. Gaur, this book was also translated into Gujerati by Niranjan Parman. There is a difference in the technique of telling and of writing stories in the literature of Rajasthan. *Chauboli* demonstrates admirably the old technique of telling, as opposed to writing. This technique is reminiscent of the plot within the plot, different characters telling their tales, as in Chaucer and Boccaccio.

The death in 1938 of Pandit Pareek was a loss to lovers of Rajasthani literature and tradition. His learning and industry had won him a reputation among scholars throughout India.

In 1939, the S. K. Pareek Memorial Society was formed to carry on his work.

In 1945, a branch of the Bengal Hindi Mandal (Society) of Calcutta was formed in Pilani to collect and classify Rajasthani material. Mr. L. N. Birla is the President. Many

valuable manuscripts have been collected and thousands of *geets* classified and indexed.

In 1951, following many years of spade work under Professor Gaur (Birla College), a dictionary numbering eighty-thousand Rajasthani words was initiated in Pilani, under the patronage of the Bengal Hindi Mandal.

Professor K. L. Sahal, Professors P. R. Gaur, and Thakur Idan Ashia, edited *Veer Satsai,* a collection of heroic couplets by the modern poet Surya Malla Mishran (1868-1925). This book, which contains a long biographical introduction and a critical appreciation of the poet's work, was awarded Rs. 1,000/- by the Bengal Hindi Mandal (Calcutta), and is a prescribed text-book in M. A. Hindi at Rajasthan University.

A volume of Rajasthani Proverbs, collected by Professor K. L. Sahal was awarded a prize of Rs. 250/-.

There are in preparation collections of *padas* (verses); some *ghumar* (dance-songs, which mostly take place in *purdah*); *dhamal,* verses sung in accompaniment to holy dances; and a biography of Chandra Charit. This remarkable find is a family collection of 360 paintings of the Rajput School, which was discovered in Jodhpur state and bought for Rs. 200/-. It is now in the passession of the Bengal Hindi Mandal.

Professor Sahal and Professor Gaur provided me with some literal translations of representative Rajasthani poems, both ancient and modern. Lora, who rendered them in verse, writes :

"I have not been able to put these Indian poems into an English which does justice to their lavishness and to their subtlety. Too florid an English becomes Wardour Street and bogus, so in an attempt to preserve the natural dignity and strong action of the originals, I have had recourse to simplicity. But the originals are complex ! The natural music of these poems is, therefore, alas, absent, but I have tried to suggest their mood. I have to thank Professors Sahal and Gaur for their help and guidance, and Pandit Ganpati Swami, another collector and composer, for singing me many songs."

EXQUISITE

Speaking to her husband, the young bride complained :
"I do not want to fetch water from the pool, for fear of the evil eye.
Dust will dim the lustre of the *hingloo* mark upon my brow, O my dear one,
And my costly new *chungri** will fade in the sun.
In this sandy soil of yours, the fragile feet of your darling will sink and slip,
Her fair body will darken, and her tresses become thin, from carrying water-vessels on her head,
Her delicate limbs will twist under their weight.
Therefore, O my husband, do not pester me to fetch water from the pool."

FOLK SONG

The Bride's Mother asks the Elements to spare the Newly wedded pair who are journeying together upon a horse to the Bridegroom's Home

O queen cuckoo ! Sing 'peehu, peehu,' to please my daughter who travels to her husband's home.
O cloud the king ! Thunder no more lest the young husband's bluepainted horse be startled,
Lightning, O queen lightning ! Cease thy flashing lest the horse should bolt.
O wind, queen wind ! Breathe gently, or else your gusts will blow away her coloured *chunari*,
And the five-hued turban of the bridegroom will vanish in the sky.
Dim thy glare awhile, O great lord Sun ! Lest thy blaze should dazzle the young bride, and the bridegroom suffer from thy scorching beat.
Mountain, O royal mountain ! Lower thy ramparts, so that I may still see the coloured garments of my daughter.
Partridge, king partridge ! Whistle thy note on the left hand of their pathway, so that my child may be blessed with good omens.

* A wide head-scarf that falls to the hem of the skirt

DUHAS

Wonderful is the Marwar country, where water is deep, soil is shining clean;
Where woman is arrayed in novel garments. Wonderful the country which gives birth to great warriors with their famous swords.

The mother teaches the babe in his cradle the glory of death,
and exhorts him never to surrender his land, but to hurl himself against his enemies in the battlefield.

In this dark age there is none amongst women to compare with Marwar,
Whose gait is as sacred as the Ganges, whose wisdom is deep as Saraswati, whose temperament is as graceful as Sita.

The beauty says : "The dark clouds are frowning on the horizon and it is raining heavily.
I will only take you for my true love when you come to me with your turban wet."

KSHATRIYA'S LULLABY

by

Ganpati Swamy

A child is born : the mother speaks softly into his ears :
"O babe, as I nourish thee, so mayest thou delight my heart,
And spread thy mother's name abroad by famous deeds in every land.

"O babe, thou hast come forth from my womb. I have gone up to the roof and struck the gong to announce your advent.
So may the war drums herald your going into battle.

"O babe, as I cut the navel string with a dagger,
So mayest thou cut the heads of thine enemies with a sword.

"O babe, as I bear now the burden of thy body on my knee,
Free the world from the burden of sin ; prove thyself no load upon Mother earth.

"O babe, as I lull thee in thy small bed of many colours,
Mayest thou send to eternal sleep the many-hued armies ranked upon the battlefield.

"O babe, as I swing thee to and fro in thy golden cradle,
So many times mayest thou make the earth to tremble with the trampling of thy steed.

"Only if thou doest these deeds will thy life be justified.
Fail, and I will declare myself a barren woman, in spite of bearing thee, O my son."

FOLK SONG

The Peepli Tree

No word, no word, my dear lord, since long ago you left me at the call to service.
Light of my darkness ! Heart of my home !
In the dawn of your departure you planted the seed of a Peepli tree ;
In the years between, richly has it grown fresh shoots, thick foliage.
Our child too has grown tall and brought forth blossoming youth.
Your own mother waits to give you her blessing.
Come home, come home ! Lord of my womanhood, lamp of my house !

Dear heart ! Each day I chase the black crows, pretending that they startle at your coming.
My eyes have faded, the *hingloo* is covered with dust.
Return at last, Gem of my brow !

As there is no milk without whiteness, so without thee
there is no life.
O my guest ! In your absence I fast unto death.
My Lord ! Now colourless are my clothes.
So weak am I that my ring slips down to the wrist.
Come now ! The invited of your beloved.

O black, black crow ! Here are my eyes !
I will pluck them out. Take them to my Lord.
Let them have but one sight of him, then willingly
may you devour them.
Return, O guest of thy beloved !

My lord ! When I was but a child playing in the
courtyard of my mother's house,
You came and married me, then went away.
But grey now is my hair turning.
Come at last ! O life of thy beloved.

SAINANT
or
TOKEN OF LOVE

by

Mukul

The painted scarlet of her hands as yet undimmed,
The auspicious *hingloo* mark upon her forehead,
Her head-dress glittering,
Her flower garland fresh and perfumed,
Anklets upon her feet, jingling at every step,
The splendid Rajput princess mounted the palace
steps.
But shy as a bride, her heart awaited love's consum-
mation.

In his lodging the Chundavat chieftain untied his
nuptial knot,
Yearning passionately for the beauty of his wife still
hidden in *purdah*.
So deep his longing, he thought not of himself.

Sudden, the war drum thudded upon the battlement;
No wedding fanfare this. For an instant he forgot desire.
Then paled his gallant Rajput features, he bit his lips and cried:
"I will not go to battle with my clansmen!

Here will I live caressing thee, O singer of sweet songs.

Must love for ever yield to war?
What care I for the glory of battle?
Let even Mewar surrender to conquerors,
To no conflict will I ride."

Upon this she spoke to her husband:
"O my lord, there is no need to go.
Here am I to take thy place.
Give me thy sword, and thou mayest have my bracelets and my marriage garments,
Go hide thyself in the women's quarters, and confine thyself to these four walls.
How could I bear to send him to battle-death,
My lord, who is as tender as a young shoot,
As delicate as a blossom that fades and withers in high noon?"
Unwilling to admit her words, he silent sat like ignorant dolt,
Though when he understood, his eyes burned red with rage.
But still he stayed.

She leapt from the ivory bed her eyes ablaze.
Instantly was she Chandi incarnate,
She was Bhawani herself, and every limb shook.
He put on his armour and left the palace.
Majestic among the warriors, he joined his clan's war cry to the din of hooves.

Relief and gladness first filled her heart,
Then wide-eyed sorrow seized their place.
Like one whose death-wound sapped her very life,
Heartbroken, she staggered to the window.

There, outside the gate, the chieftain spoke brave words to the Sesodiya Rajputs.
At that moment the Chundavat looked upwards to the palace :
Their eyes met : his words faltered, and he forgot his duty.
In haste, he sped a servant to the inner apartments
And demanded a token of love.

The superb queen considered this, surprised.
Then : "Go tell your master, the queen is dead."
"Have you no last token then ?" he said.
She unsheathed a sword and at one blow struck off her own head.
It fell into the hands of the servant who fled,
Bearing it to the chieftain.

Rising in his stirrups, eagerly he asked for the token.
Lo ! In the hands of the messenger grinned the head of the queen.
Deep were the sighs he heaved.
"My beloved, my queen, my beloved," he murmured.
"It was I who was led astray. You pointed out the way.
Worthy of a true Kshatriya was your lesson."
The Chundavat bound her head about his neck,
Slung it from ropes of its long black hair, then
He rushed into battle, and, like a roaring lion, ravaged his enemies.
The noise of his galloping, the shocks of his strokes
Were like thunder and thunder bolts.
His guerdon was Victory,
All Rajputana blessed him and said :
"Victory to Rangirani, Goddess of War—
And greatest victory to Mother India !"

CHAPTER XIII

THE BIRLA CENTRAL LIBRARY

THE BIRLA CENTRAL LIBRARY, now housed in the main campus block, contains a spacious main reading room and newspaper and magazine room on the ground floor, while there are facilities for research and private study on the first floor.

In 1952, the library contained 36,992 books. There had been 2,051 additions during the year and 38,441 volumes had been issued. Two hundred and forty-seven periodicals are received. Out of a total annual expenditure of Rs. 58,823/-, new books accounted for no less than Rs. 33,581/- and periodicals for Rs. 8,856/-. By contrast, the library of Delhi University in the same year contained 65,000 books and had a budget of Rs. 51,000/-.

Books are a psychological symptom of some kind with me. When, as now, I have never been able to afford anything else, I have always managed to buy books. (I might add that I have always told Lora that however poor we are, she should always use our overdraft to buy a new dress. I'm glad to report that she does). I therefore lingered over the shelves of the library where I first saw it in old Pilani and again in its new premises. I tested it on economics and found it full and up to date. Book lunatics recognise each other without difficulty and I soon saw that the librarian, Mr. V. P. Varma, moves among his books like a lover and knows how to guide a student anywhere on any subject.

In 1952, enrolled membership of the library totalled 122 teachers, 163 members of the Trust staff other than teachers, and 1,156 students. Residents of Pilani are entitled to use the library for an annual subscription of Rs. 6/- and a Rs. 30/- refundable deposit. Students are allowed to take out up to four books at a time.

The library is spacious and well-lit. My only regret is that it contains none of those vast sink-at-sight armchairs from which it requires a struggle to rise. Some of my most purple hours at Oxford were spent in the college library, largely because I was enjoying myself, but also because once you had sunk into the depths of an armchair, it was easier to stay down than to get up. The cushioned chairs used in Britain's

temperate climate would not do in India's hot weather, but those pleasant basket-backed flattened U-shaped chairs, still to be found in the retiring rooms of India's railway stations, would do admirably.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BIRLA VISHVAKARMA MAHAVIDYALAYA

THE BIRLA VISHVAKARMA MAHAVIDYALAYA, an engineering college affiliated to Gujarat University, provides degree and diploma courses in Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineering; it is sponsored by the Charutar Vidya Mandal in co-operation with the Birla Education Trust which gave Rs. 25 lakhs towards the cost of buildings and equipment.

The college, situated four miles from Anand at Vallabh Vidyanagar, a rural educational colony, was formally opened on June 14, 1948, by H. E. Earl Mountbatten of Burma, last Viceroy, and first Governor-General of independent India.

The College is an important unit in a novel and comprehensive scheme of rural development. The late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India, had for many years nursed the hope that an all-embracing scheme of rural uplift could be launched in order to raise the social, economic, and cultural level of the villages in his home province to a standard comparable with that of any country in the world. The pioneers of the scheme, Messrs. B. D. and B. K. Patel, thought out a plan which approached the problem from two directions : (a) for economic and social uplift, they proposed to render direct service to villages by tackling problems of water supply, sanitation, and provision of cheap power to develop small cottage industries; while (b) for educational and cultural development, they proposed that colleges for all branches of higher education be established in the countryside.

For the uplift objective, a co-operative society called the Charotar Gramoddhar Sahakari Mandal was set up, which runs saw-mills and furniture shops ; a big foundry ; a spun pipe factory which makes pipes for domestic use and for irrigation ; a cement tile factory ; and an up-to-date workshop producing household and agricultural requirements.

For the educational development objective, another body known as the Charutar Vidya Mandal was formed to manage an Arts and Science College—the Vithalbhai Patel Mahavidyalaya, and the Engineering College, known as the Birla Vishvakarma Mahavidyalaya. A Commerce College was started in June, 1951, and it is intended to add a Medical College.

These proposals were approved by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and received the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi.

In the course of his inaugural address, Lord Mountbatten observed : "But, to me, the most interesting part of what I have seen here is the concept of a self-contained village around a multi-purpose educational establishment, for which the Birla Education Trust has made such generous provision. Arising out of this whole concept comes the idea of a complete rural university, and as we all know, the establishment of a rural university in Gujarat was one of Gandhiji's chief desires. He saw clearly that the different outlook between town and country postulated different methods in education. For example, town life with its large industries and mass production methods demands very different treatment from the rural areas, where cottage and small-scale industries are far more suited. Town and country also require different applications of science in its many branches."

The Birla Vishvakarma Mahavidyalaya is allowed by Gujarat University to admit one hundred students for Civil and fifty for Mechanical and Electrical degree courses, which last three years. The minimum qualification for admission to the degree courses is the Inter. Science of Gujarat University with Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics, or its equivalent from another recognised university. There are many more applicants than vacancies and students who secure less than 50 per cent at the Inter. Science examination have no chance of being admitted.

The College also runs three-year Diploma courses in Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineering, to which the minimum requirement for admission is the certificate of the Bombay State Secondary School Examination Board or its equivalent. The courses are approved by the Bombay government and successful students receive government Diplomas. The fees are Rs. 250/- per term for degree and Rs. 100/- for Diploma students.

The College encourages extra-curricular activities. In addition to sports, there is an active literary and debating society, a dramatic society, and a cine-club which shows instructional as well as entertainment films. The College publishes the "Vishvakarma" Annual.

I am indebted to Mr. S. B. Junnarkar, M.B.E., B.A., B.Sc., London, formerly Principal of N.E.D. Engineering College, Karachi, Principal of the College, for the information in this note.

CHAPTER XV

TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF TEXTILES, BHIWANI

By

Willis Bell*

FROM PILANI to Loharu and then—36 miles of India's worst. One soon learns to appreciate the supercilious look on the faces of the dozens of camels passed along the way, a way that seems frankly contemptuous of the twentieth century.

I arrived in Bhiwani in the late afternoon and, inquiring about the Technological Institute of Textiles, was directed along a paved road next to a special railway siding to "Birla Town", on the outskirts of Bhiwani. It is a shock to leave the quietness of desert places and be thrust instantly into the rattle of a modern industrial society: workers streaming out after the mid-shift, railway engines working, dripping water trucks, and the inevitable host of cycle rickshaws.

Somehow it never occurred to me to ask for the "Principal" of a college, for the very atmosphere of the mill suggests foremen, managers, and union leaders. I was directed, however, to the residence of Mr. D. L. Sen, the Principal of the Birla Technological Institute of Textiles.

First a word about Mr. Sen's bungalow, for in some strange way that bungalow became, for me anyway, a symbol of what I found to be the unique about the Institute: by the tall stack and boiler rooms; through check gates being elbowed by hot, tired workmen; passed the workers "lines" where round roof brick huts, eave to eave, hunched together on both sides; big buildings on the left, a field on the right, and then, suddenly, a lovely little cottage—little, but lovely—with just the suggestion of a garden on the far side showing around the edges of the building, and beyond—the desert. That bungalow is caught on the verge, the line between the contemplative and thoughtful quiet of the desert and the angry threshings of the steam-damp weaving rooms. Mr. Sen, the Principal,

* To reach Bhiwani from Pilani is a cross-country trip for which the most comfortable choice of transport lies between a jeep, which can "shoot" the sand drifts, and a camel. Unfortunately, Lora has a back that is liable to "play up" and she did not dare take the risk of being made to lie prostrate at Bhiwani for some weeks after arrival. Bill Bell therefore kindly provided me with this note on his trip. J.H.

seems to be made of just such a mixture, for it is as easy to imagine him participating in a meeting of the Board of Directors of a large industrial combine or a University as it is to see him with rolled sleeves pitching into great piles of fluffed cotton.

The Institute is a complete industrial plant in operation, turning out some 5,000 yards of cloth in each 24 hour shift, and yet at the same time it is a complete college. The mill is the Institute. Some ten years ago, G. D. Birla, feeling the need for carefully trained technicians with both theoretical and practical experience, purchased a mill to be run by the Birla Educational Trust, to train students and at the same time be a going concern whose profits could be turned directly into the Trust funds. It is this mixture of practical experience and theoretical training, the Mill-cum-Institute, that sets Bhiwani off as unique in India, for all other textile institutes and training schools require considerable periods of practical experience following their regular degree courses before the trainee is prepared to take his place in industry. I believe that the only other institution similar to Bhiwani is in Switzerland.

Bhiwani students achieve this simultaneously and are able to secure excellent jobs immediately after graduation. Approximately one hundred students are training in the mill where 2,500 workers are employed in a three-shift day. A staff of teachers and professors conduct classes and supervise the programmes of practical training. Three hours of every day at least are spent by the students actually working in the spinning and weaving looms or in the laboratories. All equipment is of the latest design or is being replaced by new machinery, the bulk of which is the product of other Birla industrial concerns. There are at present some 10,000 spindles in operation.

The Institute is affiliated to the Punjab University and grants a B.Sc. Textiles to successful students. A diploma course in spinning and weaving for students who have passed their matriculation runs parallel with the college course. All students are resident members of the Institute, as are the professors and ninety per cent of the Mill hands. Birla Town is really a town, a factory, and a college, all in one.

The lay-out of the plant, its excellent equipment, the smoothness with which college and mill life are combined, are due to the progressive ideas, technical background, and educational training of Mr. Sen and his staff.

Because of the technical nature of the subjects taught, instruction is of necessity in English and again, because of its specialized nature, text-books are at a premium. The Institute is provided with a first class scientific library that is in constant use by the students.

The following additional information is taken from the Bhiwani prospectus:

The spinning department is fully equipped with complete single process blowroom machinery—58 cards, drawings, clubbings, inters and 41 ring frames with a total of 15,572 spindles. The majority of the ring frames are made by Texmaco, an enterprise of Birla Brothers, the pioneer manufacturers of textile machinery in India. The spinning department has recently been equipped with M. S. 2 type system, *i.e.*, the double zone slubbing and inter, the latest invention which shortens the preparatory process in spinning. The weaving department has 427 looms with dobbies etc. The preparatory section has up-to-date equipment, such as high speed warping and winding machines and a new slasher sizing machine. One hundred automatic looms are on order. There are modern dyeing, bleaching, and printing plants with 11 jiggers, six yarn-dyeing vats, a hydro-extractor, a high pressure kier (3 tons capacity), an open cemented kier (1 ton capacity), a bleach craft washing machine, a bleach craft chemicking machine, a scutcher, a padding mangle, a four roller printing machine, a vertical drying range of six copper cylinders, an ager and a soaper. A stenter is being installed. There is a complete finishing plant.

Extensions and renovations go on all the time. In 1951, the students themselves erected a number of new machines, *e.g.*, 100 looms, 33 ring frames, two drawing frames, one slubbing and two inters, one high speed winding and warping machine, sizing machine and power plant machinery.

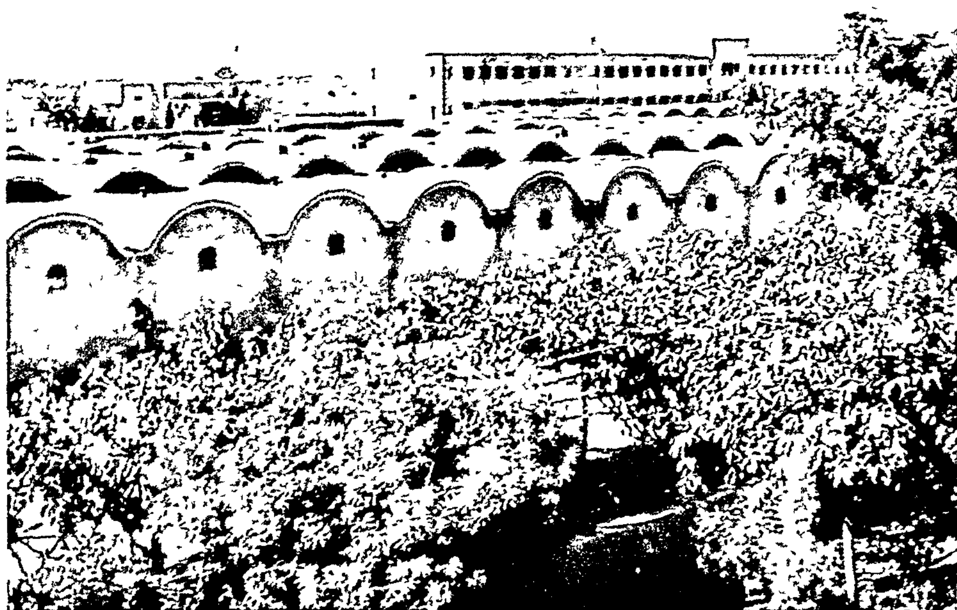
The Institute has well-equipped Physics, Chemistry and Textile Testing laboratories, a library, reading room, drawing hall, textile museum, and an auditorium.

The students do their mill training in the morning and theoretical work in the afternoon. These facilities are not available in any other textile training centre in India. Bhiwani students are trained in production control, mill management, labour relations, and welfare work. Thus, at the end of their three years' course, they leave the Institute ready to take on a job without need for further practical training.

The Institute lacks adequate playing fields. Under the



110 Main entrance to the Technological Institute of Textiles Archway in course of construction

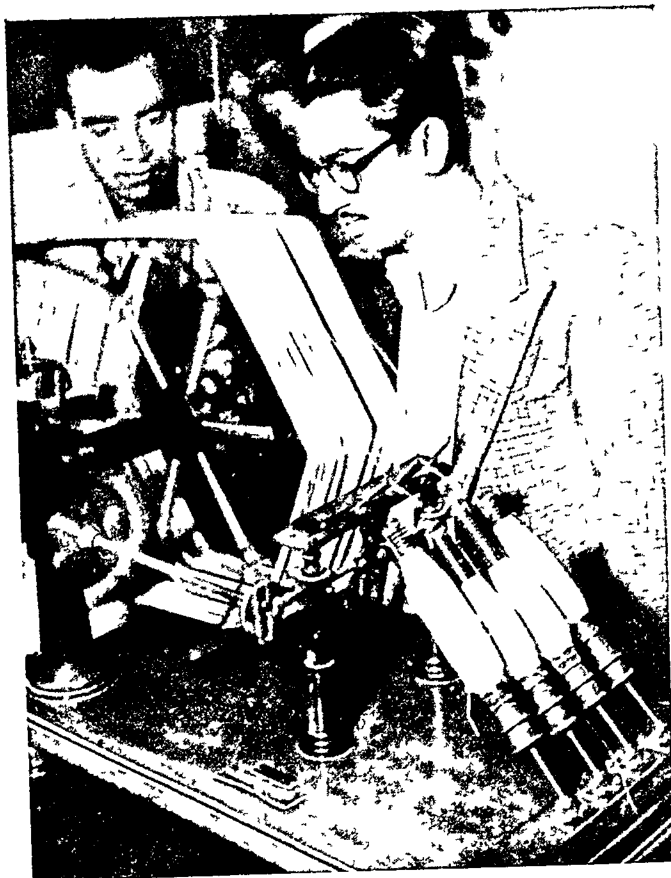


111 In front workers' houses, in rear new hostel and Principal's Cottage



112 Principal Sen at the door of the Textile Museum, with Gandhi's bust and charka

113. Warp or Woof?



114 Boys testing spindle samples

115. Testing purity of cotton fibre

Land Acquisition Act, 1894, representations have been made to the State Government for permission to lay out playing fields and to construct additional professors' quarters, another hostel wing, and other buildings.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRUST'S WORK : DEBITS AND CREDITS

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS have been descriptive. The moment has now come to attempt an assessment of the work of the Birla Education Trust.

No institution is perfect, so let us begin by seeing what constructive criticisms can be offered.

A point that Pilani has in common with all India is that its compulsory physical training is of the physical "jerks" type. Modern technique, which does not seem to have penetrated to any part of India that I happen to have seen, uses less and less specialised apparatus, avoids the smartly jerked movements with taut muscles beloved of the drill sergeant, and exploits natural movement. No longer is a prescribed type of movement itself the chief object of each exercise ("Now girls, heels together ! Knees outward bend !"). Study of the physiology of motion has led modern P. T. instructors to seek variety in the achievement of a set aim. Children are told to get over a jump in whatever way seems easiest ; then they are gradually led on to discover for themselves the most economical way of clearing the obstacle.

The original systems of gymnastics were devised to develop the muscles of men bent on feats of strength in the championship categories. These systems, with their elaborate apparatus of parallel bars, etc., were lightheartedly introduced into the state schools after universal education had flooded the classrooms of the Western world with children of whom perhaps a third were fit to be subjected to such physical strains. In an average class, some children would be of poor physique or in indifferent health through malnutrition, some would be suffering from congenital defects or from diseases, others from faulty postures or from injuries of which parents, teachers, and child, were often unconscious. It was the legacy of damaged health, with all its miseries, that gradually brought the realisations that (1) imperfectly trained enthusiasts were treating "under par" children as though they had the physique of circus acrobats, and (2) the immature bodies of children required P. T. techniques adapted to protect and promote *natural* health and growth (as opposed to exceptional championship muscles), which concentrated on coordination and correction (rather than on impressive displays of human

pyramids, exciting catch-as-catch can over vaulting horses, and other flashy *tours de force*). Systems were evolved which using hardly any apparatus yet secured high standards of fitness. Some of these might be called Physical "Elastics" rather than Physical "Jerks". Teachers trained in modern methods realise that one of their most important responsibilities is to detect faulty development before permanent damage occurs.

These remarks may provoke astonishment in the breasts of athletic champions, ex-army N.C.O's and the like, usually in charge of P. T. in India, who may retort that never in their experience have they heard of such misfortunes. Many internal injuries do not, however, reveal themselves at once but are discovered following, it may be, years of growing discomfort and ill-health, the cause of which has not been apparent.

Women, in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Britain, pioneered the new techniques. In particular, the Bedford (England) Women's Physical Training College made special studies of remedial treatment and synthesised Scandinavian methods with their own. Bedford-trained teachers were in demand throughout the world in the inter-war years, as country after country became aware of the harm caused by the "good old" methods. It seems to me that the Birla Education Trust has here another opportunity to play a pioneering role in India in an exceptionally important sphere.

I heard grousing among sections of Pilani's students about the food. The Pilani system of feeding differs from that in other educational centres in that (apart from the Vidyapeeth, Montessori, and High Schools, which have their own kitchens) the Birla and Engineering Colleges are fed by an officially appointed caterer. In other educational centres, small groups of students usually make their own messing arrangements, hiring and firing their own cook and table bearer. The attractions of this system to the students are obvious: they can order whatever food and dishes they please, and they can keep a day to day check on expenses; if mess bills rise, the cook is asked why. The disadvantages, on the other hand, are (at least from the viewpoint of a parent) even more obvious. If my children were allowed to order what dishes they liked, they would live off fried fish, fried potatoes, and icecream. They would rarely eat anything boiled or roast and no green vegetables or fresh fruit. They would grow up puny creatures, lacking vitality; their resistance to disease

would be poor; their average expectation of life might well be around twenty-seven years.* Indian children are no different: what do they know of calories and balanced diets? And the easiest way for a cook to reduce the amount of his bills is to cut down the more expensive (and nourishing) varieties of food and to use ingredients of inferior quality. It would, moreover, be a rare student who would make a daily inspection of his kitchen, to ensure cleanliness of utensils and hygienic arrangements, and to see that his cook is not suffering from some communicable disease. What student would bother to inspect his cook's hands and finger nails every day?† It is evident that adequately balanced diets and hygienic conditions can be secured in a properly controlled central kitchen, which must also be cheaper to run through bulk buying.

Apart from these considerations, the Trust insists on common food for all in order to promote social unity. Different foods are eaten, cooked in different ways in various parts of India, and the average Indian will not normally eat food to which he is not accustomed. The classic example of this is the rice eater who in time of famine will die rather than eat wheat. It is as part of its aim to break down social barriers that the Trust insists that its students, drawn from all over India, should sit down together, irrespective of caste and creed, to eat wholesome food, irrespective of local type and custom. It is, however, easy to see why this system, so contrary to Indian practice, arouses grumbling and complaints.

On the other hand, the difficulties of serving food attractively to a thousand people are also obvious. I do not know what goes on today, but certainly in my time at school we used to groan about the food and I have never heard any school boy in any country admit that he was well fed. The grumbler is usually comparing his school food with the fare that he gets in his home. When, however, only one family has to be catered for, it is not difficult to meet individual tastes and to serve attractive meals.

From what I saw in Pilani, I am inclined to think that there is an arguable case for decentralising and working towards the ideal of having a kitchen for each hostel. I also subscribe to the not very revolutionary view that food is better chosen and prepared under the supervision of women than of men. It would be an advantage if every Pilani

* This is the average expectation in India.
† This was Lora's daily practice in India.

kitchen were supervised by a trained dietician with the energy, disciplinary qualities, and fearless outlook of Mrs. Devaki Upadhaya. There would, however, be initial difficulties in placing the catering in charge of a woman because there are as yet few professional women in India. It would be difficult to recruit trained dietician housekeeper superintendents able to discipline a large crowd of male servants and to deal with complaints from male students and male heads of colleges and hostels. Since the problem of institutional catering, dieting, and kitchen control, is an all-India one, it seems to me that the Trust has an opportunity here for further pioneer work. The possibilities of preparatory classes in the Vidyapeeth linked to a graduate course in the Birla College of Arts and Science (of which Mrs Upadhaya is now the principal) would be worth investigating.

Another complaint was that the diet was wholly vegetarian to the exclusion even of eggs. Vast numbers of Indians have no religious objections to meat and eggs, and it seems an unnecessary restriction on beneficial variety of diet to prevent those who have no religious scruples from eating eggs and meat. Moreover, in a country which experiences periodical food shortages, the wider the varieties of food eaten, the less the risk of shortage in the over-all supply.

In general, however, I would reply to those who grumbled about the food in the Birla and Engineering Colleges that I find no difficulty in believing that it fell short of the ideal—that is not peculiar to Pilani but is characteristic of all large-scale institutional feeding. Secondly, I would call attention to Bill Bell's photograph (Number 5) of the kitchen in a typical Calcutta students' lodging house. The hole in the roof is above the cooking stove. The food is exposed to the flies and dust of the street a foot outside the camera's range. I cannot believe that any eatable food can be produced there during the monsoon. Nothing similar exists under the Trust's control.

Sex education does not figure in the curricula of the Trust's institutions. In Britain, this term means instruction in sex physiology and hygiene in order to promote rational thought about a subject which the Victorians succeeded in surrounding with unhealthy emotions and fantasies. The task is simplified for Western teachers because there is today virtually no controversy about the social relationship between the

sexes. British boys and girls grow up together; their attitude towards each other is one of comradeship on an equal footing. They learn to be good companions. Consequently sex education in schools is concerned with commonsense matters of health and not primarily with the social relationship of the sexes, although this benefits indirectly by the elimination of morbid curiosity and mystification.

Several of Pilani's professors impressed on me the need for a book on sex education. One said, "We want a book in Hindi, written by an established authority, so that parents will feel re-assured. It's silly not to provide one—young minds reach out and devour whatever they find to their hands on the subject. If we don't give them something wholesome, they simply buy the undesirable and indescribable trash that you can pick up for a few annas anywhere in the bazaars. There'll be a market for that stuff just as long as we don't provide something in its place. If some university, or recognised institution such as the Birla Education Trust itself, were to sponsor a short book in Hindi, suitable for young people of either sex, it would be doing a highly important educational job. After all, our young people are well-intentioned to begin with. It's only when they read enough of these trashy books that they build up unhealthy attitudes." This was a typical expression of opinion.

But an attempt to launch sex education in an Indian school would at once come up against the prior psychological problem of the social attitude of men and women towards each other. The attitudes of Hindus, Muslims, and Parsees, etc., vary in different parts of India, and within the Hindu community, custom often differs from caste to caste, ranging from the strictest *purdah* to considerable freedom. But broadly speaking what strikes an observer of the Indian scene is the absence (outside a small circle of sophisticated city dwellers) of companionship between men and women. Now, I submit that any custom that unnecessarily narrows human experience narrows the personality by preventing it from attaining the fullest possibilities of its development. In the attempt to clarify my ideas on this problem, I was naturally led to consider the part that feminine companionship has played in my own life. When I consider, for example, the wide-ranging and stimulating discussions that Lora and I have had over the material that she collected for this book, when I look back on the new experiences that our Pilani venture has en-

abled us to share, and the fun that we have had in this joint enterprise, I am appalled to think of the gap that there would be in my life if Lora's interests were confined to the children and the kitchen, grateful though I am for her *expertise* in those important departments. And when, looking back over my working life, I recall the lasting friendships that began through working with feminine colleagues in London, Paris, Washington D.C., and elsewhere, I realise how impoverished my outlook on men and affairs would be without them. Neither men nor women are complete by themselves ; they were not meant to live segregated, and when they do some distortion in the personalities of each is inevitable.

As in so many other directions, the Trust has made a beginning in the problem of the relationship of the sexes. The Vidyapeeth is contributing to the enhancement of the status of women in India, in that all that makes girls better equipped to play their parts as intelligent and *informed* mothers and heads of households gives them greater self-confidence and thus constitutes progress towards the goal of real companionship. In the Birla College, boys and girls study side by side, and mixed classes are taken by both men and women teachers. Incidentally, this intermingling is taken so much for granted that no one thought of making special mention of it to me, and it was Bill Bell who, strolling with his camera along the college corridors, spotted a woman teaching the mixed class (photograph number 23). Girls also take part in the College debates. And the Trust's unconventional pioneering attitude is well illustrated by its appointment of Mrs. Upadhaya as head of the Arts College. While there are several women principals of women's colleges in India, Mrs. Upadhaya is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the first and only head in India, and perhaps in the world, of a university college for men *and* women. I have no doubt that under her battling guidance the Arts College will sprout fresh laurels in unexpected places.

But much remains to be done, and one hopes that Pilani will gradually find new means to break down the artificial barriers that still exist. The Montessori boys and the Vidyapeeth girls are, for example, of suitable ages to be brought together in what could be made joint affairs such as debates, theatricals, picnics, and tennis. Such a programme is so contrary to traditional Indian thought that there would at first be criticism and shaking of heads. There would

doubtless have to be some planning to minimise initial mishaps. But the Trust has not so far shown itself deficient in courage in braving orthodox opinion over such matters as the abolition of untouchability. And the goal—the enriching of the Indian personality through real equality and companionship between men and women—is worth an effort.

If every school in India were to observe the rule enforced in Britain whereby nobody can teach in a state-controlled school who is not qualified, there would be scarcely any schools open in India, and the absence of a teachers' training college is a gap in the Trust's work. Pilani would be an exceptionally suitable place for a training college because of the variety of practical experience—ranging from village primary school work to the different requirements of the High School, Montessori, Vidyapeeth, and the colleges—which trainees could gain by being sent for a number of periods a month to each institution. Moreover, the reader of the previous chapters will perhaps agree, the Trust's staff includes principals who would make ideal teachers for such students. That Pilani's institutions themselves do not find it easy to recruit the right type of teacher seems a final argument for training men and women to meet their own needs. A training college would also be a means of diffusing throughout India knowledge of the experiments that are being made in so many directions at Pilani. In my view, the Trust owes it not only to itself but to Indian education to start such a college.

It is relevant to our investigation to observe that the reader who has borne patiently with me up to this point probably knows more of the work of the Trust's institutions than, saving Pandeji alone, any member of its staff. After talks with principals and teachers in all the Trust's institutions, I could not help being struck by the comparative lack of knowledge in any one institution of what was going on in the others. I found misconceptions existing in institution A about the aims and methods of institution B. In view of the good work that the Trust's institutions are doing, some of it original, unexpected, and exceptionally interesting, this ignorance is a loss to each individual institution. New ideas, methods, discoveries, and experiences, should be shared, to the benefit of all, as indeed used to be done in Pilani in the early days after Pandeji's arrival when the scale of the work allowed for intimacy and

close co-operation.* At present the staffs of the Pilani schools and colleges lead more or less self-contained lives. What one would like to see would be regular staff meetings, first. between principals and their immediate assistants at which common problems might be discussed informally around the tea-table. Secondly, while it would, of course, make for too unwieldy meetings to assemble the entire teaching staffs of all the institutions, means could be found to arrange "get-togethers" for small groups with interests in common.

In making these suggestions, one feels how much easier it is to promote such meetings in Britain or America where, what with Senior Common Rooms, social clubs, country clubs, tennis clubs with Saturday-night dances, and so on, opportunities abound for staff men and women to meet without the formalities of a set committee or conference. It is true that there is a pleasant little teachers' club in Pilani, with tennis courts, and a reading room—a sort of miniature country club—but it is not the humming centre of social life, with teachers and their wives in and out all the time, making up parties for this game or that dance, that it would be on a Western campus. The Trust might find it rewarding to give some thought to the problems of providing ways and means, suitable to Indian customs and ideas, that would serve to promote (1) the exchange of professional experience, (2) social contacts and solidarity among all the men and women who serve Pilani's varied institutions. At the present time I see Pilani as a series of unconnected individual schools and colleges. I believe that something would be added to them if they developed a corporate sense—if each felt themselves to be part of a greater whole.

This corporate sense is, in my mind, bound up with what I have said earlier† about the importance of developing social co-operation among students : it should be a vital part of their education to see the teachers and principal of their own school co-operating not only with each other but with their colleagues in sister institutions. Thus would they absorb, without being aware of it, the concept that responsible citizenship involves a series of smaller and bigger interlocking loyalties—to the family, to the class, to the team, to the dormitory, to the House or *niwas*, to the school. to the college, and to Pilani. Students will not learn to feel this way by being told that they

† Cf page 19.
* Cf page 61.

ought to, but only by seeing the concept in action around them every day. This should be one of Pilani's greatest assets, for whereas Calcutta's students and professors are lost in the mazes of a commercial and industrial area pullulating with 4,000,000 human ants crammed into living space meant for 1,500,000, Pilani's students and professors should be able to lead a true university life. To them, space does not mean weary distances to be covered by complicated changes of buses and trams through malodorous bazaars, but space large enough for movement, breath, and enjoyment of the distant horizon, yet small enough to preserve the individuality, in a social group with a common purpose.

While we are considering social co-operation, I have a suggestion to offer about the technique of debating. The object of the Pilani and Naini Tal "parliaments" is partly to teach self-government, and partly to give practice in the art of debate and public speaking. In British universities, the first ten or fifteen minutes of a meeting of the Union (as debating societies are usually called) is taken up with domestic matters : members offer their suggestions for the better conduct of the Union's affairs ; they ask questions and make criticisms. But the main business of the evening is a debate on some pre-arranged subject—social, political, economic, literary, artistic, etc.—which is solely an exercise in public discussion. On the other hand, if the administration of the society's affairs is made the main subject for debate, the proceedings risk degenerating into a contest of personalities rather than of ideas ; the debate in Naini Tal was great fun but I cannot help feeling that such proceedings could create the impression in inexperienced minds that the real object of a debate is to harass authority rather than to establish the pros and cons of the motion before the house.

I have compared the salaries paid to Pilani's principals and teachers with the scales obtaining in non-Government schools all over India as reported by the Government of India's Bureau of Education (Ref. Ed. 67.51-750) and with the salaries prescribed by the Grant in aid rules (West Bengal notification No. 5899 Ed. of 8.12.1951), and find that the Pilani scales are slightly above the average. But where the Pilani staff is substantially better off than teachers elsewhere is in the matter of allowances. The Trust allows each teacher : (1) wheat at the rate of Rs. 5/- per maund up to

nearly 2 maunds a month, which, at the current price, represents additional real income of Rs. 240/- a year: (2) sugar at Rs. 15/- per maund up to ten seers a month, which represents Rs. 50/- a year: (3) cloth to the value of Rs. 100/- for Rs. 30/-, an addition of Rs. 70/-; (4) house rent at about .75 per cent of the cost of the building as opposed to six to ten per cent of the salary charged to those in government service; this probably means a real addition of Rs. 120/- a year; (5) free education of all children from primary school to graduation. To an average family with four children this would represent from Rs. 240/- to Rs. 800/- a year, depending on the age of the children; (6) concessions on books and stationery for four children would amount to Rs. 100/- a year. This makes a total of between Rs. 820/- to Rs. 1,380/- a year, to be added to the salary of a representative teacher with four children. Moreover, the teachers' bungalows that I saw were all pleasant and attractive looking little homes, especially when compared with conditions in other centres.

The evidence given before the University Education Commission, as well as the views of several of Pilani's heads of colleges that I have quoted* suggests that there are a variety of phenomena in Indian life that make for widespread dissatisfaction—inadequate social co-operation; poor leadership that relies on repressive discipline rather than on appeal to the social instincts; and, above all, the repercussions of poverty on the human personality. Popular mythology in all countries idealises the poor, while the rich man is held up to hatred, ridicule, and contempt for all the vices. In real life, what brings out the best in a man is a challenge within his power of struggle. The risk that faces one whose riches are inherited is degeneration through lack of challenge; contrariwise, if the odds against the poor man are too great, *i.e.*, if circumstances make the effort needed to improve his condition greater than he is capable of putting forth, he will have no time, energy, or inclination, to cultivate the finer human sensibilities. The poorer he is, the greater are likely to be his frustrations and dissatisfactions, and the more will his personality be distorted by his resentments. This is not a re-assertion of the Victorian view that poverty is a crime, but

* Pandit Muttoo, page 109, Mrs Upadhaya, page 207, Mr Joshi, page 122, Dr. Chandra Shekhar, page 125, Pandeji, page 265 See also chapter III *passim*

a statement of fact involving no moral reflections on rich or poor.

The Indian masses are poor. The *Eastern Economist* calculated that annual income per head was Rs. 246/- in 1946/48, but that when this income was adjusted against the Bombay cost of living index, it gave real buying power of Rs. 62/- per head, which was actually five points below pre-war, for, in 1939/40, income per head was Rs. 67/-, and its buying power in Bombay was also Rs. 67/-. How are these figures to be interpreted? I think it probable that the dissatisfactions of the purely rural masses (whose incomes are not wholly in cash, and who have in folk-lore a number of statistically non-assessible satisfactions) are less than those of town-dwellers. The dissatisfactions and sense of resentment must rise steeply as you pass from the peasantry into the ranks of what in the West would be called the artisan and white collar classes. These (as Dr. Chandra Shekhar pointed out*) are the classes from which the Birla High School draws most of its students.

It is also important to remember that the poor student finds many Indian schools still influenced by the "resistance to authority" ideas inculcated during the national struggle for independence. To render respectable, and deliberately to cultivate opposition to constituted authority over a period of half a century cannot fail to have produced its psychological effect.†

These economic, psychological, and historical considerations are apt to be forgotten by the average head of a college or hostel when he receives a complaint from a student. In all institutions—whether a regiment, a hospital, or a business house—a wise leader investigates a complaint patiently. A schoolmaster has a greater responsibility to show patience than any other leader, because his behaviour helps to form the permanent attitude of his charges towards constituted authority. A schoolmaster, more than any one else, needs to bear in mind the factors outlined above that tend to promote feelings of resentment and rebellion against the social order, for, to the young, the school and the teacher symbolise the world into which they are being trained to fit, and against which, in their inexperience and unhappiness, they are reacting.

* See page 125.

† This point was made again and again by witnesses before the University Education Commission. See page 20.

I say "unhappiness," for there is much nonsense talked about youth being "the happiest time of your life." Childhood and adolescence are periods of adjustment and all periods of adjustment are full of strains ; that is why it is the duty of the teacher to make allowances, to try to make children happy despite the inevitable strains. If a teacher is incapable of this effort, is it not his duty to get into another profession in which he cannot harm the youth of the nation ?

I dwell on those thoughts because there may be a tendency in a place like Pilani to look round the fine buildings, the splendid equipment, the vast playing fields, the ample accommodation, the amenities, the innumerable extra-curricular activities, and to say: Any one who grouses in such surroundings is ungrateful—think what he would have to endure elsewhere. But, for the causes outlined above, resentment against authority is so much part of the Indian background that it is unreasonable to suppose that all who enter the Trust's institutions will be miraculously free from it. Secondly, Pilani's boys and girls have few means of comparing their lot with that of others. Here, as I have said before, I believe that the Trust might be doing a service to itself and to the community by arranging periodical visits to other educational centres. The obvious way that suggests itself is by sending football, cricket, hockey, athletic, and debating teams, further afield than at present, and by sending a school entertainment on a tour.

To this suggestion some may object that the Trust's students will be exposed to "bad indoctrination" if they meet others who live amidst the strife described in pages 11 to 40. In fact, however, as the evidence of the University Education Commission shows, the tourists could meet only that small and select section of India's students who have sufficient access to playing fields to be good at games. A drive through the purlieus that adjoin College Street in Calcutta, in which so many students are compelled to live, might, however, induce reflective students to count their blessings and spread the word on their return to Pilani's open spaces and irrigated acres.

Professor H. C. Batra, chief warden of Birla College, who has had experience in other Indian educational centres, made an observation to me which deserves to be recorded. He said that apart from the small numbers of those who belong to sophisticated circles, the average man in India is conscious

of himself first and foremost as a Bengali, Punjabi, Tamil, Gujrati, etc., rather than as an Indian, and the Professor considers that one of Pilani's contributions is that it does not merely serve local interests, as do most Indian universities. In 1951, while fifty per cent of the Birla College students came from Rajasthan, fifty per cent were equally drawn from the United Provinces, East Punjab, Madras, Hyderabad, Patiala, Madhya Bharat, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Bihar, Sindh, Ajmer-Merwara, Cochin, Travancore, Kashmir, Bengal, and Bombay. Professor Batra pointed out that critics hinted that this all-India attraction was not due to Pilani's superiority as a seat of learning but arose because each of India's state universities had more applicants than vacancies, and some students who came to Pilani had been turned down by more than one university. But he refuted the inference that Pilani therefore received below average students. Pilani, he asserted, received those who did not have enough personal influence to get them in elsewhere. These early rejects from elsewhere were, moreover, proving an asset in that they were spreading Pilani's name far and wide, and boys and girls were now seeking entrance to the Trust's institutions as their first choices. Parents appreciated Pilani's freedom from indiscipline and its splendid opportunities. In this way, Pilani is contributing towards all-India unity. "We are a cross-section of the nation," Professor Batra reiterated. "We all eat the same food. We wear the same school dress for formal occasions. We recognise no creed or caste. We are all Indians."

Yet at the same time there is nothing chauvinistic about the Trust's outlook ; on the contrary, it welcomes the cosmopolitan touch. The Trust has given whole-hearted support to the Italian Madame Montessori's ideas, and you have seen in chapter VIII how the Montessori school consciously strives to maintain international contacts and to promote an international outlook. The appointment of an Englishman, and subsequently of a German, to the headmastership of the Vidyamandir is further evidence of the Trust's pre-occupation with educational rather than narrowly nationalistic ideals.

In view of the clash between the traditional and the new India, and of the difficulties of adjustment which ensue, I am struck by the importance given to religious observance and moral instruction in all the Trust's institutions, and I

believe that the experiments being made in Pilani, and in Naini Tal, to find a new expression of religious feeling and moral thought, free from denominational trappings, deserves to be better known, not only in India but abroad where similar difficulties are being experienced in many countries.

Educational results are more difficult to assess than any others and the results of the Trust's pioneering work in the rural areas are no exception. Statistics tell something of the story. I regret that the following are not all comparable but they are near enough to show the trend :

Literacy in the Shekhawati among men in 1921 was 3.1 percent and among women .26 percent. In Jaipur state 5.3 percent of the men and .85 percent of the women were literate in 1941. The all-India figure in 1941 was 12 percent literates. In 1949, it was estimated at 18 percent.

With these wider figures, the statistics for Pilani village compare thus :

LITERACY IN PILANI VILLAGE

Year	Total population	Literates percent	Literate women percent
1931	6,127	22.4	9.8
1941	7,891	32.4	11.5
1951	9,390	49.0	31.0

It is probable that the surrounding rural areas, into which the Trust penetrated deeply in years past, would reveal figures that would compare as favourably with the national figures.

Enquiries that I made on visits to rural schools, formerly run by the Trust and now taken over by the state, revealed that attendances had fallen off. The Trust is not an impersonal authority like a vast unwieldy department of a bureaucracy ; it is in fact two people : G. D. Birla and Pandeji, who take an active personal interest in all the ramifications of their work. The withdrawal of this personal interest was felt at once when the rural schools went over to the state. Inspection visits became few and perfunctory. In some case buildings have fallen into disrepair, new construction has stopped, teachers have left, and vacant posts have been left unfilled for lack of candidates.

The Socialist axiom that the common man works unhappily and reluctantly to swell the profits of private enterprise, but

leaps into joyous life, like one released from a burden, when he works for the state and for the good of the community at large, is not borne out by experience in rural Shekhawati.

At the banyan tree village* the schoolmaster begged and begged me to ask Pandeji to resume his periodical visits, even though he was no longer connected with the school, because, he said, Pandeji's interest gave the school prestige locally, created interest, and helped to keep up numbers. He used to feel supported. Now, he told me, he felt alone and discouraged. A state inspector had come once, had made no comments, seemed to have seen nothing that interested him, had never returned, and had done nothing about the requests made to him. I noticed that the school had a half built wing lying neglected. The schoolmaster looked dejected.

The most obvious result of the Trust's rural work is that its primary schools created a demand for further education and in consequence the state opened a number of high schools, some of which have developed into intermediate colleges. Thus boys who started life in a Birla primary school have been enabled to go out into a wider life, to earn higher incomes, an appreciable proportion of which is sent back to their families. It cannot, of course, be denied that there is also a reverse side to this medal (as to all others) in that a proportion of these boys have left the countryside merely to swell the ranks of unemployed matriculates, have been compelled to live in slums, have contracted diseases, have lived unhappier lives and earned less than if they had stayed on their fields. The most satisfying lives are probably led by the very large proportion who join (a) the armed forces or (b) one or other of the many Birla factories as skilled workers. These types do not usually sever their links with the countryside, but return for their leave, and retire to their village at the end of their working lives. This has helped to better rural conditions.

If it cannot be said that the Trust has solved all the problems of rural education, it can reasonably be claimed that it has carried out pioneer experiments, and brought increased wealth and satisfactions to many a Shekhawati home. Reflecting over his experience, Pandeji believes that India's secondary education problem cannot be solved until there is coordination between the federal and state ministries of Industry and Commerce and the secondary education authorities. There are few trade schools, and no polytechnics or guild

* See page 127.

schools, to take in boys anxious to enter the ranks of the higher artisanate. It is unfortunate that because the standard of national wealth is such that casual workers in kitchens, dining rooms, workshops, or in the fields, earn only a few annas a time, a boy cannot work his way through school in India as he can in America.

In describing the art work both in Pilani and at Naini Tal, I broke my rule of reserving comment for this chapter. I formed a high opinion of the art work that I saw at the Vidyapeeth, the Montessori, the High School, and the Vidyamandir. Two suggestions : (1) In order to show variety of technique and outlook to these young artists, the walls of classrooms and hostels could be decorated with a changing series of good Medici or Phaidon prints ; and (2) one would like to see more work done from nature in the open air. Nevertheless, I place art work among the Trust's successes.

I am not competent to judge the standard achieved in music by the Trust's boys and girls, but it was clear that music is made a part of their lives. There is too much Philistinism in industrialised urban India, and it was good to see these young people being introduced to the values of the spirit before being exposed to those of the market place.

An outstanding contribution to the nation's spiritual wealth that the Trust is making is its broad-minded readiness to support educational experiments. The head of one of the Pilani institutions volunteered the information to me that the Trust never interferes with day-to-day administration but is content to lay down policy and even then it is flexible towards modifications or objections and allows considerable variations. If an experiment does not turn out well, my informant said, the Trust makes no reproaches ; it looks upon the outcome as so much ground explored and added to knowledge. All heads of institutions subsequently confirmed this.

Some who read this may retort that they would prefer to send their children to schools where they will not be used as guinea-pigs for educational experiments. "One can only remind such people," said Mr. F. T. Coade, the headmaster of Bryanston School*, "that, in fact, all schools experiment with other people's children all the time. The only difference

* In a lecture given in March, 1953, to the Harrow School '27 Club, and kindly communicated to me. J H.

is that traditional schools apply the same experiments to thousands of children as have already been applied to hundreds of thousands of their predecessors ; and they go on with the same experiment, presumably because they are satisfied with the result. Whereas new or 'progressive' schools try out, from time to time, and sometimes adopt, the more promising ideas that emerge from the findings of the medical, psychological, and sociological sciences. The impulse behind educational experiments is the conviction that what was good enough for the previous generation is not necessarily good enough for their successors. The rapidly changing currents and circumstances of 20th century life demand (they believe) a rather different kind of citizen—one more broadly, if not more profoundly civilised; more aesthetically aware, more imaginative, more adaptable—in a word, more mature than those, *e.g.*, who failed to prevent two world wars."

The implications of the Trust's experimental work are wider than may seem at first glance : they raise the problem of the Trust's future in an India which has been proclaimed a Welfare state.

The state has in all countries been reluctant to give up the controls that it assumed over private enterprise and the rights of the individual in the Second World War. For the moment, the trend seems towards increasing nationalisation, socialisation, welfarism, or whatever you like to call control by bureaucrats. There is no sphere over which a new regime casts a more jealous eye than the educational, for in free thought, criticism, and new ideas, it smells danger to its particular ideology. So much does the totalitarian communist loathe variety of ideas that he has invented the word "deviationist" to brand as anti-social in the eyes of all decent citizens anyone who thinks for himself.

For more respectable motives, the Socialist also seeks uniformity in education. His professed aim is to prevent the children of any one section of the community from having educational privileges which would give them an advantage over the children of the "common man". Discussing the British Socialist view, *The Economist* said on March, 7, 1953 :

Not only must there be schools but state schools ; state schools must themselves be reorganised in order to reduce differences of background, social origin, and even inherited ability, to complete uniformity of out-

look. More nearly than before, the aim has become free mediocrity for all . . .

That social distinctions are produced by differences in ability is apparently quite as worrying as the power of the purse in education. "If we segregate our children at the early age of eleven into three streams we create social divisions in our society," Mr. Peart warned the committee ; and Mr. Ede defined those divisions as management (produced by the grammar schools), foremen (produced by the technical schools), and "those who are going to do the work" (produced by the secondary modern schools). It has long been axiomatic to egalitarians that the public school must go. Now that the results of giving free places in grammar schools to all who make the grade become manifest, it is no less clear that the grammar school must go as well.

All the Trust's institutions, save the primary schools, are in varying degree institutions for "privileged" children in the sense that, except day scholars and for those who secure Birla "freeships" and scholarships, they charge fees. Not so many Indian parents can afford the High School's Rs. 400/- a year; fewer the Montessori's Rs. 1,000/-; and only a minute decimal percentage the Vidyamandir's Rs. 2,000/-. Now, I readily concede that the state should provide the best possible education free to its young people. In America, a student who pays for his education from kindergarten to graduation has become the exception. But the words "the best possible education" beg many questions. You have only to read the Harvard report on *General Education* to realise that standards vary enormously in America and that the average is low compared with the "best available". Indeed, the Harvard report makes it clear that American standards have fallen from a high average at the beginning of this century precisely because there began thereafter the great drive to give every American citizen the right to free primary, secondary, and university education. Standards fell not only for the obvious reasons—lack of teachers and heavily increased size of classes—given time and sufficient national income these difficulties can be overcome—but fundamentally because—and this is what the Welfarist is so loath to admit—the larger the numbers in any enterprise, the lower the average standard ; and, in education, it is the intelligent and the gifted who suffer at the expense of the average. So that even in America, which has probably the best system of public education in the world, many parents who can afford it send their children to private schools of their choice and to private universities, like Harvard or Princeton, in preference to the average state university.

Is this wrong ? Does the community not benefit by having a higher percentage of highly educated citizens ?

It depends how you ensure the percentage of the highly educated, retorts the Socialist. That some students can enter Harvard, or the Montessori, or the Vidyamandir, because their parents can pay up, is not in itself evidence (says the Socialist) that they are more intelligent and therefore more deserving of different education than the sons of poor parents. If one replies that since the number of applicants is greater than the vacancies available in those institutions, they can eliminate those students who cannot keep up with the standard required, the Socialist then says that this is unfair to the children of those poor parents who cannot afford the fees, and that it is the duty of the state to provide scholarships for *all* who are capable of benefiting by the education provided. With this argument I sympathise. I am by no means sure that I shall be able to afford to send my sons to Oxford, and I am glad that there is a scheme whereby, providing that they can pass the entrance examination, the state will make up what I cannot afford. But such schemes cannot be approved from the national viewpoint without some qualifications. In an ideal world, the universities would expand their staffs and their amenities to meet the higher influx, and providing that the money were available to meet these increased charges, all would be well.* In the real world, conditions are always likely to fall far short of the ideal. Such schemes are possible in Britain and America because those two countries can (at the moment) afford them. But a depression in America might modify conditions there and would have profound repercussions on Britain's national income, and it might be that severe cuts in the British budget grants for education—always the first to suffer in all countries in times of crisis—would follow. And what about a country such as India ? Here, at the present rate of progress, several generations are likely to pass before the national income is high enough to begin to attempt to put the "best possible" education within the free reach of all.

The question then arises : *Shall a boy or girl, whose parents can afford it, be deprived of the best education available merely because the state has not yet grown rich enough to make arrangements for every single boy or girl, rich or poor,*

* The argument that standards will fall through increased members is met in this case by assuming that the standard will be maintained by admitting only those capable of benefiting by the higher education offered—the filter being either an entrance examination or intelligence tests.

to have an identical "best" education?

The current Socialist view is really an argument for the absolute economic equality of all citizens. But no political theory in vogue today demands this. Stalin cut short all argument (at any rate among Communists) when he said:

The sort of socialism in which everyone receives the same wages, the same quantity of meat, the same quantity of bread, and the same products in the same quantity—such a socialism is unknown to Marxism. Equalisation in the sphere of consumption and personal life is reactionary petty bourgeois nonsense, worthy of some primitive set of ascetics but not of a socialist society.*

In *Professional People*,† Messrs Lewis and Maude, discussing the British National Health Service observe:

... all doctors within the National Health Service should welcome the survival of private practice outside it, as the most thoughtful already do. Practice outside the scheme sets a standard of independence and competence which is of value to the whole profession; furthermore, it keeps alive the possible alternative. The state would feel far stronger if private practice were stamped out entirely, and doctors dismissed from the service were as completely finished as doctors struck off the Register. Then doctors can be forced to accept any conditions in general practice, and all sorts of disciplinary 'postings' may become possible On the contrary, doctors ought to regard the survival of private practice as an insurance, not as competition; the public should know that private practice exists, enjoys great respect, and may have particular advantages

It may be fanciful to liken the position of private practice outside the N H S. to the position of private schools vis-a-vis state education. But they both perform much the same function They keep an alternative alive, admittedly for those who are prepared to pay for it; that people are prepared to pay for something a little better and more individual than the state standard is a tribute to both professions, and an ever-present warning to the state .

The risk of outright nationalisation of private schools in India is doubtless remote for the time being; the danger that hangs over them is that ever increasing taxation will cripple institutions like the Birla Education Trust, and that middle class parents, ground between taxation and the inflated cost of living, will no longer be able to afford the fees.

One must hope that the Government of India will act with self-restraint and solve such difficulties by grants in aid, leaving institutions free to pursue their own policies. But there can be no doubt that the day that the burden of taxation forces the Birla Education Trust to turn to the government, its capacity to serve India by experiment and variety will be

* Quoted in D Thomson's *Equality* (Camb. Uni Press)
† Phoenix House, 1952.

threatened by the same drive towards deadly uniformity that threatens Britain, and which arises as much from the bureaucrat's natural reluctance to say "Yes" to anything new as from egalitarianism. The civil servant in Washington D.C., London, Paris, New Delhi, Peking, or Moscow, is a man whose first thought is to play safe according to the rules. Deviation from the centre of the well-trodden path can only spell risks to him. If he makes a mistake, there may be trouble with the party, or questions in parliament, or some Senator may start a witch-hunt in Congress. Better say "No". Yet none of the great discoveries that have given man a stride forward in his command over the universe can have been found lying in the centre of any well-trodden path. Experiment, trial and error, deviation, form the only road to the advancement of knowledge and the improvement of man's lot.

These fears of increasing bureaucratic encroachment are heightened when one considers how the Trust's work has, in order to obtain recognition for its degrees and certificates, been bound by syllabuses drawn up by outside authorities. As was pointed out at the very beginning in chapter V,* Pandeji was critical of the curriculum laid down by the Boards of Education, and if he had not felt that the practical disadvantages of non-recognition were too great, the whole curriculum at Pilani would have differed profoundly from the conventional one imposed on him.

The extent to which some Indian Boards of Education go in restricting the freedom of schools was described thus to me by the head of one of the Pilani institutions: "They now prescribe books for every subject and make you fill in a form undertaking to ensure that no other books are used in your school. The Boards more often than not prescribe books in which they have personal financial interest—books which they have written themselves, sometimes under assumed names to make things slightly less obvious. And books which they publish themselves; the binding is often atrocious—whole sections of pages omitted. The proof-reading is non-existent—half a dozen misprints a page are common—and the printing bad for the children's eyes." This particular principal considers that his first duty is towards his pupils and while he cannot help keeping the prescribed books on the shelves, he uses those that cover the syllabus in a way that he approves of.

* See page 59.

This brings me to the evils of the examination system in India. I need not dilate upon them for they have been debated *ad nauseam**. Indeed, I doubt that any educational system in the world has been investigated so exhaustively, in so many official reports, which so many governments have ignored for so many years. There is no recommendation that can be made about Indian education which is not to be found—ignored—in some existing report. In all its propaganda pamphlets the Government of India pays lip service to the cause of education, but, pleading lack of funds, it does little to further it. It would not, however, cost an anna to carry out the innumerable recommendations made for the abolition of examining boards. Professor A. N. Whitehead puts the case against the existing system in a nutshell :

.. Every school is bound on pain of extinction to train its boys for a small set of definite examinations. No headmaster has a free hand to develop his general education or his specialist studies in accordance with the opportunities of his school, which are created by its staff, its environment, its class of boys, and its endowments. I suggest that no system of external tests which aims primarily at examining individual scholars can result in anything but educational waste.

Primarily it is the schools and not the scholars which should be inspected. Each school should grant its own leaving certificates, based on its own curriculum. The standards of these schools should be sampled and corrected. But the first requisite for educational reform is the school as a unit, with its approved curriculum based on its own needs and evolved by its own staff. If we fail to secure that, we simply fall from one formalism into another, from one dung-hill of inert ideas to another ...

.. When I say that the school is the educational unit, I mean exactly what I say, no larger unit, no smaller unit. Each school must have the claim to be considered in relation to its special circumstances. The classifying of schools for some purposes is necessary. But no absolutely rigid curriculum, not modified by its own staff, should be permissible. Exactly the same principles apply, with the proper modifications, to universities and to technical colleges.

Seeing what sound work the Trust has accomplished under the handicap of the existing conditions, one cannot but speculate what wonders it might have achieved if Professor Whitehead's views had been Indian practice since 1929.

As I reach the end of my task, I am conscious of how much I have had to omit, partly because the Trust's activities are so multifarious that to cover all would have involved Lora in at least double the length of her actual visits to Pilani and Naini Tal, which was not, alas, possible, and partly because I have

* The most up-to-date symposium that I have seen is *Examinations in India—Defects and Remedies* by Dr. Salamat Ullah (Orient Longmans, 1951)

had to cut ruthlessly in order to keep this book to a reasonable length. I regret that Lora was unable to visit Bhiwani and Vallabh Vidyanagar. I regret that I have not been able to cover the activities of the Birla Dairy and High School farms; I can only report that in the course of taking his pictures, Bill Bell formed an enthusiastic opinion of the work of the High School farm. I regret that it was not possible to cover in detail the craft-work which, as I said earlier,* struck Lora and myself as among the most successful educational experiments made in India or in any other country.

People have figured prominently in these pages, but the staffs of all the Trust's schools and colleges at Pilani and Naini Tal (excluding the rural schools) totals nearly two hundred, and glaring omissions of many who have made their contribution were inevitable. In a letter to me Pandeji observed:

"Some of the senior teachers in the institutions who have done good work in raising the standard of education have not been mentioned .. Prof. Sri Ram Mittal, now the Acting Principal of Birla College has several years' devoted service to his credit... Dr. A Mukerjee worked hard, tirelessly, and unassumingly to equip his physics laboratory which is today one of the first-class laboratories in Rajasthan. He has earned a reputation as an outstanding teacher—one who keeps himself aloof from politics of all sorts which have unfortunately invaded our universities and educational institutions. He has kept high ideals before his students and has personally contributed to their attainment by his own personal example of conduct above reproach ... Dr. R. D. Gupta, who has dealt with the largest number of students in Science Since Chemistry is compulsory for all who take the Science group, he was worked indefatigably to make the Chemistry lab. worthy of the institution. It was an uphill task to conform to the standards laid down by the Trust and Professor Gupta has rendered a good account of himself"

Another omission that I regret is the name of Mr. Sharma, estate agent, business manager, and man of affairs of the Trust since the first square yard was wrenched from the desert. I remember once standing with him on the steps of the Canal Kothi on a brilliant February morning, taking in the blossoming gardens and the green burgeoning trees, listening to the hum of bees and to the murmur of many waters—bubbling in the irrigation channels, chattering over the water falls, spraying out of revolving hoses, tinkling in the middle distance from a pipe over by the canal. Mr. Sharma turned to me: "When I look around all this greenery, I can't help thinking of that hot day, so long ago now, when I waded in

* See pages 68-9.

the sand to the top of this rise—just a sand dune then—and looked across empty space to the roofs of Pilani village over there. You can't see them now because of those trees and the masters' quarters round the playing fields. I was alone, and it was hot, and a snake squirmed by. I never foresaw what we see today. There were no colleges, no hostels, nothing but sand dunes and thorn bushes, and that snake..."
Another picture that I have is of Mr. Sharma and one of his foremen cycling behind us as we were going somewhere in the tonga. They were discussing some work in progress and had to raise their voices above the tonga's jolts and jingles. From the midst of their Hindi, I caught the English words "... scaffolding ... culvert ... concrete parapet ... bank manager ... railway siding ... iron drain pipes ... road metal..." It was the litany of Mr. Sharma's life's work.

The High School and the Birla College—the banyan tree from which all the rest of the Trust's work spread its branches to loop into new roots and new trees—continue progressive and alert to new ideas, as witnessed by the advent of Mr. Joshi and Dr. Chandra Shekhar at the High School. The original Birla College is now divided into two separate colleges : (a) the College of Science and Commerce, of which Mr. S. R. Mittal was officiating principal in 1953, and (b) the College of Arts under Mrs. Devaki Upadhaya.

Bhiwani is training technicians and skilled workers for India's great textile industry. Its manufactured products contribute a sizeable sum to the upkeep of its sister institutions. There is no other college exactly like it in India.

At Anand in Gujerat, the Trust is collaborating in giving life to the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's dream of an educational colony built not to meet the needs of city-dwellers but specifically to meet those of the countryside.

Economists have estimated that if India's resources were fully exploited, she could within a quarter of a century become the third greatest engineering country of the world—she has the coal, the iron, and the hydro-electric power. Under Professor Lakshmi Narayanan's aggressive chieftainship, the Engineering College is building up traditions which should stand India in good stead if that goal is realised.

The Vidyamandir's contribution is that of the public school tradition, a conscious training for leadership. By this very fact it is likely to be an increasing focus of criticism if the Leftist-egalitarian trend that manifested itself so strongly

after World War II persists. The challenge to the Vidyamandir is to silence this criticism by the quality of the men that it sends into public life. They must be able to "walk with kings* nor loose the common touch".

Girls are subject to certain stresses and strains in all countries but, conscious of the particular strains that India imposes, I took particular delight in the happy and relaxed expressions of the Vidyapeeth girls, all learning to take their places in the new India that is coming into being, and that the Vidyapeeth is itself helping to fashion.

The work that is being done in the Montessori Junior and High Schools is unique of its kind in India, and, I do not hesitate to add, in the world. In my view, these schools rank as show places. Educationists from all countries have something to learn from them.

Every child has its special aptitude. Tragedy begins when natural craftsmen have their self-confidence undermined, and their personalities frustrated, by being treated as though they were natural intellectuals. It is equally damaging to insist that the born classical scholar should waste his time on mathematics, or the mathematician on the arts. The mere enumeration of the Trust's institutions suggests that there is no Indian child for whose aptitudes, whether of the hand or the head, they cannot cater. Variety in national unity is the essence of education and of the Trust's work.

The evidence submitted in the course of this book seems to justify the conclusion that among the Trust's contributions to the future of India have been its provision of good buildings in which to study and live, food supplied under controlled conditions, medical attention and facilities, pleasant hostels, a fine library, opportunities for scouting, athletics, games, hobbies, the arts, and a variety of other extra-curricular activities, for the 6,238 boys and girls who attend its institutions. Above all, the Trust has provided *space and distant horizons*.

* If he had written this today Kipling would doubtless have substituted "commissars" for "kings".

INDEX OF PAGE HEADINGS